

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

(A step towards the study and better understanding of the Religion and Teachings of Islam)

by

SAYYID ABUL ALA MAUDUDI

Translated by

DR. ABDUL GHANI

(Ex-Director of Public Instructions, Afghanistan)

1940

Sh. MUHAMMAD ASHRAF
KASHMIRI BAZAR - LAHORE

1st Edition

Re. 1-8-0

Printed by Mirza Mohammad Sadiq at the Ripon Printing Press
Bull Road, Lahore and published by Sayyid Muhammad Shah,
M.A., Manager, "Tajuman-ul-Quran," Poonch Road, Lahore

FOREWORD

As the very name of the work indicates this small book is an attempt at a clear and concise interpretation of Islam. The chief aim in view has been to present within a brief space the most systematic and logical conception of Islam to build a coherent and organic structure of human life on the basis of this conception, and to give a comprehensive and lucid account of what this religion in reality is. Another point which is to be specially brought to the notice of the readers is that, in fact, this book is a first approach to the study of Islam, but it is hoped it will be self-sufficient for an average man, nevertheless it will serve as a good helper to a more sustained effort toward understanding Islam.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Abdul Ghani, ex-Director of Public Instruction, Afghanistan, who took pains in translating the book from the original in Urdu, and also many thanks are due to Prof. Abdul Qayyum Malik, of Law College, who read through the translation.

ABUL ALA.

Lahore,
March 10, 1940.

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
I. ISLAM	...	1
	Why is Islam so called—The meaning of the word Islam—The nature of Islam—The nature of Kufr—The disadvantages of Kufr—The advantages of Islam.	
II. FAITH IN GOD AND OBEDIENCE TO HIM	...	23
	Knowledge and conviction or belief essential for obedience to God—What is Faith—The means of attaining knowledge—Faith in the Unknown.	
III. THE PROPHETHOOD	...	35
	The nature of Prophethood—How to know a true Prophet—Obedience to the Prophet—The necessity of having faith in the Prophet—Brief history of Prophethood—The Prophethood of Muhammad—Proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad—The end of Prophethood—Full definition of Islam.	

Chapter	Page
IV. ARTICLES OF FAITH— <i>The Detailed Faith</i>	77
Faith in God—The meaning of <i>La ilaha illalah</i> —The real sense of <i>La ilaha illalah</i> —The effect of the belief in the Unity of God on man's life—Belief in the angels of God—Belief in the Books of God—Belief in the Prophets (Messengers) of God—Belief in the Day of Judgment—The necessity of belief in the Day of Judgment—The truth of the belief in the Day of Judgment— <i>Kalimah-i-Tayyibah</i> —Islam in a nut-shell.	
V. RELIGIOUS DEVOTIONS ...	125
The spirit of Devotion—Namaz—Fast—Zakat—Pilgrimage — Defence of Islam.	
VI. FAITH AND RELIGIOUS LAW ...	147
Difference between the Faith and the canons—The sources of the religious Law— <i>Fiqh</i> ; <i>Tasawwuf</i> .	
VII. SHARIAT— <i>The Law of Islam</i> ...	157
The principles of Shariat—The four kinds of rights—Rights of God—Rights of self—Rights of men—Rights of all creatures—Universal and eternal code.	

In the name of the Most Gracious God.

Chapter I

ISLAM

Why is it so called?—The meaning of the word "Islam"—The nature of Islam—The nature of kufr—The disadvantages of kufr—The advantages of Islam.

Every religion of the world has been named after its founder, or after the people among whom that religion had taken its birth. For instance, Christianity is so called because it takes its name after its founder Christ; Buddhism after its founder Buddha; Zoroastrianism after its founder Zoroaster; Judaism, the religion of the Jews, after its founder who belonged to the tribe of Judah or the country of Judæa and so on. Islam, however, claims the unique distinction of having no association with any particular person or people. The word Islam does not express any such relationship, for it does not belong to any people, person or country. The object of this religion is to create in man the quality or *attitude* of Islam. Among every people there have existed good and righteous persons and

Towards Understanding Islam

do exist, they were, and are, all Muslims.

“Islam” is an Arabic word, and signifies submission and obedience. The meaning of the word “Islam”. religion of Islam is so called because it is submission and obedience to Allah (God).

The nature of Islam. You can observe that everything in the universe is under the control of an Order or Law. The sun, the moon and the stars are all knit together into a system by an unalterable law from which they cannot make even the slightest evasion. The earth moves in a fixed course with a definite velocity, hence the time, the speed and the path appointed for its motion never vary. Similarly physical elements such as water, air, heat and light, function according to set principles of their own. The constituents of the mineral, the vegetable and the animal kingdoms obey their particular Orders, in accordance with which they grow and change, and live and die. Think of man himself; he is bound by certain laws of nature. He takes birth according to a certain law; breathes, obtains water, food, heat and light in accordance with the laws related to human life. The same set of laws govern the movements of his heart, the circulation of his blood, and the machinery of his respiration. His brain, his

Islam

stomach, his lungs, his nerves, his muscles, his hands and feet, his tongue, his eyes, his ears, his nose, in short, every part and organ of his body performs its functions in the way prescribed and ordained for it in the form of a certain law or principle.

This powerful law which governs and controls all that comprises the universe, from the largest stars to the tiniest particle in the earth, is made and enacted by the Great Governor, whom the whole creation obeys. The universe, therefore, literally follows the religion of *Islam*, as *Islam* signifies nothing but obedience and submission to God, the Lord of the universe. The sun, the moon and the stars are thus all "Muslims." The earth also is a Muslim ; and so are air, water and heat. Trees, stones and animals are all "Muslims." Even a man who does not recognise God, denies Him, or worships other than God, or associates in divinity others with God, has perforce to be a "Muslim" on account of his nature, for his birth, his life and his death are all governed under God's Law ; and he is not out of the Kingdom of God. All the organs of his body, and the countless cells which constitute them, follow the religion of *Islam*, for their formation, development and functions are all in conformity with God's Law. His very tongue, which, on account of his ignorance, advocates

Towards Understanding Islam

the denial of God, or professes multiple deities, is in its very nature "Muslim." His head which he wantonly bows to others except God is 'born Muslim.' His heart wherein, through his lack of true knowledge, he cherishes love and reverence for others, is Muslim by intuition. They are all obedient to the Divine Law, and their functions and movements are governed by the principles of that Law.

Let us examine the problem in a different light.

Man has, in the scheme of nature, been endowed with a double existence. On the one hand he resembles other natures in being completely bound up by a fixed law that governs animal life. On the other hand, in his rational self, he possesses a thinking faculty, and can understand and judge for himself; accept one proposition, and reject another; like one method, and dislike another; and in affairs of life, in the manner of his free will he can himself formulate certain rules and principles, or adopt those formed by others. In this latter position he is not bound by fixed laws like other created beings, but has been given *freedom of thought, opinion and action.*

Both these aspects distinctly co-exist in man's life. In the first aspect, he is a born Muslim like all other creatures of the world, and is obliged to be Muslim, as already mentioned. In the second

Islam

aspect he has the power—the choice—to be or not to be a Muslim. On account of this power, this liberty of choice, men are divided into two categories: First, the man who knows his Creator, recognises Him as his only Master, and submits to Him and obeys His Laws unscrupulously even in matters wherein he has been given freedom of choice. He is a perfect Muslim. His Islam is complete, for this submission of his entire self to God is Islam, and nothing but Islam. He has consciously and intelligently submitted to Him, Whom he already unconsciously obeyed. He has offered willing obedience to Him, to Whom he already owed obedience without will. His knowledge is now true, for he has learnt to know God Who has endowed him with the power to know and learn. Now his reason and judgment are right, for he rightly decided to obey God, Who had bestowed upon him the faculty of thinking and judging. Now his tongue is truthful, for it expresses with conviction its confession of the Lord, Who gave it the faculty of speech. Now the whole of his life is embodied in truth, for he obeys His Laws voluntarily as well as involuntarily. Now he is at peace with the whole universe, for he worships Him, whom the whole Universe worships. Such a man is God's vice-gerent on earth. The whole world is for him, and

he for God

Secondly, in contrast to the man defined above, there is the man who is 'born Muslim,' and unconsciously remains Muslim throughout his life, but does not exercise his reason to know God, and in the sphere of his choice he chooses to deny God. Such a man is a kafir—unbeliever. Kufr literally means to cover or to conceal; the man who denies God is called kafir (concealer), for he conceals by his disbelief what is inherent in his nature, for his nature is actually imbued with the instinct of Islam. His whole body—nay every pore and part of his body functions in obedience to that instinct. Likewise everything about him in the world, living or unliving, continues to fulfil its function, actively or silently in accordance with, and in obedience to, the same instinctive or natural Islam. His reason has, however, become shrouded or mystified not only his own intelligent cognizance, but the self-consciousness of the whole world becomes estranged to him. When he thinks, he thinks otherwise than as his instinctive attitude; advises him his judgment, decision and action operate similarly.

Kufr is a form of ignorance; rather ignorance is sheer kufr. What ignorance of kufr. can be greater than ignoring to

know God, the All-Creator? A man sees this huge machine, the universe, functioning ceaselessly, regularly and methodically, but he does not know who is the creator and the supervisor of it. He sees the machine of his own body so wonderfully built and so wonderfully working; he always uses it to serve his own ends, but does not know who has made this unique structure, who has manufactured this miraculous brain, who has invented these amazing eyes; who is the scientific expert that has combined carbon, calcium, sodium and a few other materials in such a way as to create a unique living being like man. All around him in the world he observes the highest demonstrations of engineering, natural science, chemistry and other branches of knowledge and wisdom, but he does not know who is that being with such extraordinary universal knowledge and wisdom that has organised and controls this incomprehensible and complicated system and its endless work.

Just think how the approaches to true knowledge can be open to such a man who does not know even its fundamentals! Let him think and think, search, and research, he will never find the right and definite path to knowledge in any of its branches. In the very beginning he will perceive nothing but the gloom of ignorance, and through-

Towards Understanding Islam

out his gropings he will perceive nothing else till the very end.

Kufr is cruelty, nay the worst of cruelties. What is cruelty? To force a thing to function against its inherent aptitude. It has been shown to you that all the things in the Universe are obedient to their Creator, and that to obey Him, that is to be Muslim, is ingrained in their nature. God has given man power over these things, but the nature of everything requires that it should be used for the special function naturally assigned to it and that is the fulfilment of the will or the Order of the Creator. One who chooses to disobey God makes use of all things against their inherent capacities or tendencies. He forces his head to bow in homage to others than God, while the head is actually a creature of God, and because of it, it should bend in submission to Him. He cherishes in his heart the idols of reverence and love for, and fear of, others while the instinct inherent in the heart requires that actually therein nothing but reverence and love for, and fear of, God alone should reside and be cherished. He uses all the organs of his body and other things under his power and authority against the will of God, although they are fashioned to be used only in accordance with God's Laws. Now think who can be more cruel than the man

who at every moment of his life commits cruelties to everything around him including his own self.

Kufr is not mere cruelty ; it is, at the same time, rebellion, ingratitude and infidelity. Let us see what man possesses of his own, that is, which he might claim as his own. Has he created his own brain, or has God created it ? Is he the creator and maker of his heart, his eyes, his tongue, his hands and feet, and all the other organs of his body, or has God created them ? Has man created all around him in the world, or is God their creator ? Is it his own design to make these things useful and serviceable to mankind, and to give power to man of making use of them and governing them, or is it God's work ? You will thus at once clearly see and be convinced that all things of the Universe belong to God alone, that He is their sole Creator and Master, and that they have been gifted to man through His grace. When such is the actual state of affairs, who will be a greater rebel than the man who makes his brain think against God, harbours in his heart thoughts against God, and uses his eyes, tongue, hands and feet and other organs against the will of God, while all these things have been assigned to him by God Himself ? If a servant after eating the salt of his master becomes unfaithful to him, you at once denounce him to be faithless. If a

Towards Understanding Islam

king's officer uses the authority given to him by the king against the king, he is declared a rebel and a traitor. If a person cheats his benefactor, you have no hesitation to call him an ingrate. But what is the infidelity and ingratitude of one man in relation to another man? Whence does a man give food to another man? It is God Who gives food to all. Whence springs the authority with which a king invests his servant? It is God Who has elevated the king to his high position. How does a man come by the position of doing favour to another man? All that a man obtains and possesses is given to him by God. The greatest obligation that man has is that to his father and mother. But who has implanted love in the parents' heart for their child? Who makes milk spring from the mother's breast? Who has infused in the parents' mind the readiness combined with happiness to spend their hard earned wealth and their precious time and attention in the rearing, bringing up and educating a mere heap of bones and flesh? It is, therefore, evident that no man can be greater rebel, ingrate and infidel than the man who becomes guilty of kufr by denying and disobeying his real patron Lord, the greatest and the sole maintainer of all.

Do not think that by denying God man does

Him any harm. An insignificant speck on the face of a tiny ball in this limitless Universe, that man is, what harm can he do to the Lord of the Universe, Whose dominions are so infinitely vast that we have not yet been able to place their boundaries even by the help of the most powerful telescope ; Whose power is so great that myriads of heavenly bodies like the Earth, the Moon, the Sun and the Mars are at His bidding whirling like mere balls ; Whose wealth is so boundless that He is the sole Master of the whole Universe, and who provides for all, and needs none to provide for Him ? Man's revolt against Him can do Him no harm ; on the other hand, man treads the path to his own ruin.

The inevitable consequence of revolt against God is the eternal failure of the rebel. Such a rebel will never find the straight path to true knowledge, for the knowledge that fails to reveal its own Creator can reveal no truth. Such a man's reason will always take a crooked course, for reason which errs in knowing its own Creator cannot elucidate anything truly. Such a man will meet with failures in all the affairs of his life. His morality, his civic and social life, his struggle for livelihood and his administration of family affairs, in short, everything of him will be upset. He will spread confusion and disorder on

the Earth. He might, without the least compunction, shed blood, violate other men's rights, and be cruel to them. By his own evil thoughts, his weakness and bad deeds he will embitter his life ; and leaving this world when he enters the next, all things to which he had been cruel, even his own brain, his heart, his eyes, his nose, his hands and feet, will complain against him. All of them—nay every pore of his body—will decry him in the Divine court of Judgment, declaring that he had revolted against the Lord, and that during the assertion of his revolt he had forced them to serve him as *he* had wished. The earth which during his rebellion he trod and dwelt upon, the provisions which he had consumed unduly, the wealth which he had earned and spent improperly—all that he had taken possession of as rebel, and whatever means he had adopted to the service of his ends—will denounce him before God, Who will justly give him condign punishment.

After surveying the disadvantages of kufr, let us see what we gain by practising in our life the attitude of

**The advantages
of Islam.**

Islam. You find in the world around you and in your own self innumerable manifestations of God's divine power. This grand system of the Universe, which continues to function under perfect organization and in obedience

to an inevitable order, is in itself a witness that the Designer, the Maker and the Governor of such a unique and highly complicated system is an extremely strong and powerful King with infinite and all-embracing power and knowledge and unlimited resources, Whose wisdom is the most perfect, and Whom nothing dare disobey. It is in the very nature of man to obey God ; day and night he lives unconsciously in obedience to His Law ; he ceases, to live if he disobeys Him.

God, however, has granted man the capacity to acquire knowledge, the faculty to think and the sense of distinguishing right from wrong. Along with it He has given him partial freedom of will and action. In this freedom there lies really man's trial ; his knowledge, his wisdom and his power of discrimination are all being tried and tested ; and he is also tested as to how he uses the freedom granted to him. In this trial (or examination) he is not obliged to adopt any particular method, for by compulsion the object of the trial is lost altogether. You can understand that, for instance, if you are given a paper of questions for an examination, and you are compelled to give a certain answer, the examination will be of no use. Your merit can only be properly judged if you are allowed to answer as you like. If your answer be correct, you will

Towards Understanding Islam

succeed, and will get access to future progress ; but if your answer be wrong, you will fail, and your own unfitness bars the way to your future progress. Exactly in the same way God has given freedom of will and action to man so that he might remain free to choose whatever method or attitude in life he might consider proper for himself.

Now, there is a man who neither understands his own nature nor that of the Universe. He errs in acknowledging his real Master and knowing His attributes ; and misunderstanding the freedom granted to him, he proceeds on the path of disobedience and revolt. Such a man has failed in the test of his knowledge, intellect, intelligence and the sense of duty. He has proved himself to be a man of baser type. His end should, therefore, be as mentioned above.

On the other hand, there is another man who succeeds in this trial. By the proper use of his knowledge and intellect he knows God and believes in Him, though he had not been in any way compelled to do so. He does not err in discriminating right from wrong. He understands his own nature, and he understands and judges what Divine right is ; and in spite of having the freedom to assert disobedience he adopts obedience to God. He succeeds only because his intellect is of the right

kind, and he possesses the capacity for acquiring true knowledge and of forming correct judgment. He has innate sound common-sense ; he knows right to be right, and recognises and admits it intelligently. He chooses truth and sincerity, and willingly becomes a dutiful and obedient servant of his Master, though the Master had given him freedom to choose between obedience and revolt, and he might have taken to revolt if he had been inclined that way.

It is evident such a man possessing such qualities must succeed both in this world and the world to come.

A man of this category will always choose the right path in every field of knowledge and action. The man who knows God with all His attributes knows the beginning as well as the end of true knowledge. He can never err in his steps, for his first step is on the right path, and he is sure of the direction of the last stage of the journey of life. Like a true philosopher he will think of the Universe, and will try to understand and fathom its mysteries, and, unlike an unbelieving philosopher, he will not lose his way in the maze of doubt and scepticism. Through science he will endeavour to know the laws of Nature, dig out the hidden treasures of the earth and discover and direct to his service all the hitherto unknown

forces created in his own self and in the world at large. He will engage himself in finding out the best methods of turning to man's real interest all that exists in the heavens as well as in the earth. At every stage of his enquiry his God-consciousness will save him from making wrong use of science and scientific method. He will not conceive himself claiming to be the master of all these objects, boasting to be the conqueror of the nature, and determining that through the help of science he would subvert the world, subdue the weak, and establish his superiority by plunder and bloodshed. Such revolting and defiant attitude can only be taken by a kafir scientist. A Muslim scientist, on the other hand, the deeper his insight into the matters scientific, the stronger and surer will be his faith in God, and the deeper will be his sense of gratitude to Him. He will determine that as his Master has blessed him with greater power and knowledge he must exert himself for his own good and for the good of humanity, for only by doing so he can express due gratitude to his Master for the gifts He has blessed him with.

Similarly in History, Economics, Politics, Law and other branches of Arts and Science, a Muslim will never remain behind a kafir in the fields of enquiry and struggle, but their angles of view, and consequently their *modus operandi* will be widely

different. The Muslim will study every branch of knowledge in its right perspective, will strive for the right object and will arrive at perfectly sound conclusions. In History he will draw correct lessons from the past experiences of man, and will find out the true causes of the rise and fall of mankind. He will pick out the useful elements of past civilizations, will derive benefit from the examples of the really good men that have passed, and will scrupulously avoid all that had led to the fall of nations in the past. In Politics his sole objective will be the rule of Peace, Fairness, Justice, Goodness and Nobleness in the world, that no man or community of men should enslave or exploit other human beings, and Government with all its powers and resources should be considered as a trust from God and be used for common human weal. The Law should, according to him, fix the rights of all the people with fairness and justice so that no one should be oppressed and deprived of his right.

The moral side of a Muslim's life will include fear of God, righteousness and truthfulness. He will live in the world with the understanding that God alone is the Master of all, that whatever he and other men possess has been given by God, that he is the owner and master of nothing, not even of his own body, that the powers he possesses are

only a trust from God, and that the freedom he has been granted to make use of this trust in his own interest should be exercised only in accordance with God's will. He will constantly keep in view that one day God will take back this trust from him, and he will be called upon to clear his accounts.

Think of the moral standard of the man who lives in the world with the mental attitude mentioned above. He will keep impure thoughts away from his heart. His brain will not be allowed to think of evil ; he will prevent his eyes from evil glances ; he will avoid to hear evil ; he will guard his tongue from giving expression to any form of untruth ; he will prefer to keep his stomach empty rather than fill it with dishonestly gained food ; he will never raise his hands in oppression ; he will never take even a step in the path of evil ; he will never yield to wrong, though he may lose his life ; he will never gratify any of his desires or provide any of his needs by wrong and unfair means. He will be goodness and nobleness itself, will hold truth and right dearer than everything, and for their sake will sacrifice every personal interest and every desire of his heart, rather he will be ready even to sacrifice himself. He will dislike unfairness and unrighteousness above everything, and will never countenance it for fear of any loss or

for temptation of any benefit.

Such a man alone deserves success in the world.

There will be none in the world more honourable than he ; his head is never to bend before anyone but God. How can debasement or humiliation come near such a person ?

There will be none in the world more powerful than he ; he fears none but God, and expects blessings or gifts from none but God. What power can make him deviate from the path of truth and righteousness ? What wealth can buy off his faith ?

There will be none in the world richer and more independent than he ; he is neither sensualist, nor indulgent, nor greedy. He is contented with what he earns fairly and honestly ; he will discard with contempt even piles of dishonestly and unfairly gained wealth. He possesses the wealth of mental satisfaction and peace, than which there can be no greater wealth for man.

There will be none more popularly beloved than he ; he will render everyone's right duly, and will do evil to none. He will work for the good of everyone, and will require no recompense for such act. The people's hearts will be drawn towards him of their own accord, and they will find themselves impelled to love and honour him.

There will be none in the world more trust-

Towards Understanding Islam

worthy than he ; he will not betray his trust, nor will he go astray from righteousness ; he will be true of promise, and straight and honest in his dealings ; he will be strictly fair and just in all his affairs, for he is sure of God's presence, though none other may be aware of his doings. We cannot find words enough to appreciate sufficiently the credit of such a man. Will there be anyone who will not trust him ?

If you understand the true character of a Muslim, you will be convinced that he cannot live in humiliation or abasement or subjugation. He will always be dominant, ruling and governing, for no earth power can subdue the qualities and the spirit that Islam inculcates in its adherent.

Thus finishing his life-mission in this world when he is taken in the presence of God, he will find bounties and grace showered upon him by God Himself, for he had done fully what was incumbent upon him regarding the execution of the trust entrusted to him, and had secured full marks in the trial to which God had subjected him. This is a never-ending success, success continuing from this world to the next, where it further continues without end.

This is Islam, the natural religion of man, not associated with any people or country. In any age, in any country, among any people,

Islam

God-knowing and truth-loving men believed and lived this very religion. They were all Muslims, whether or not was this religion termed in their language "Islam." Whatever its name was, it signified Islam and nothing but Islam.

Chapter II

FAITH IN GOD AND OBEDIENCE TO HIM

Knowledge and conviction or belief essential for obedience to God—What is Faith ? The means for attaining knowledge—Faith in the unknown.

In the last chapter it has been shown to you that Islam means obedience to God. Now, it is a matter of common-sense that true obedience requires knowledge of and belief in some relevant facts as a necessary prelimentary.

Knowledge and conviction or belief essential for obedience to God.

First of all, one should have perfect assurance and unalloyed belief in the existence of God ; along with it knowledge of God's attributes is necessary. How can a man not possessing in his heart a strong conviction of God's existence render obedience to Him ? How can a man, who does not know that there is only one God, his Creator, and that He has no associates with him to share His divinity, avoid bowing in homage to others than God and soliciting their favour ? How can a man, who does not believe that God sees, hears and knows everything, keep himself away from

disobeying God? When you think carefully of these problems, you will understand that the quality or conditions necessary for man to follow the right path of Islam, in thought, in morality and in action, cannot be determined until he has a definite and accurate knowledge of God's attributes, and that this knowledge is not to be merely in the abstract, but it should be firmly rooted in the heart with profound conviction, so that this heart might not become a prey to the insidious onroads of ideas contradicting it or clashing with it, and his life might remain safe from acting against that knowledge.

Next to that, man should also know the right method of living in accordance with God's pleasure, so that he may choose what God likes and reject what God dislikes. For this purpose it is absolutely necessary that man should be fully acquainted with the Divine Law and Order, and should believe it as such with profound and unshakeable certainty. Moreover he must have the conviction that only by the tacit following of that Law and Order he would secure His pleasure. If a man has no knowledge of His Law at all, whom will he obey? And if he does possess such knowledge, but he lacks conviction of the integrity of His Law and Order, or he is of opinion that some other law and order, beside that parti-

Faith in God and Obedience to Him

cular one can also be right, how can he carry out the Divine Law and Order faithfully in his life?

After that, man should know what would be the consequence of going against God's pleasure and not following the Order chosen by Him, and what would be the reward for obeying Him. For this purpose the full knowledge of the life in the next world, is absolutely necessary. Man must know certainly that at last he will be brought to the highest Court of Justice, presided by God Himself, to be tried for the whole of his life work, rewarded or punished just as he merits. He should rest assured that an unfailing record of all his doings is being kept and the last judgment will be based solely upon a well-balanced examination of that record. This sense of responsibility, this certainty of being judged and tried, is quite essential for the implicit obedience of the Law of God. A man who has no knowledge of the next world considers obedience and disobedience to God both immaterial. He thinks that in the end the obedient and the disobedient will both have equal positions ; for, after death, both will be reduced to mere dust. With this attitude of mind, how can he be expected to submit to all the inconveniences and troubles associated with the active obedience, and shun those sins the commission of which does not apparently bring

to him any moral or material loss in this world. With this mental condition and belief (rather disbelief) man cannot acknowledge and submit to God's Law and Order. Similarly neither can a man, who has mere knowledge of, and not firm belief in, the life hereafter, and of the Divine Court of Judgment, remain firm and steadfast in the attitude of obedience ; for doubt and hesitancy never allow the mind harbouring them to be determined and settled in views. You set to work whole-heartedly only when you are sure that you will benefit by so doing ; while you can remain determined in your attitude of shunning a deed only when you are fully convinced of its being a source of loss or harm. It is clear, therefore, that for the purpose of following a certain method the correct knowledge, bordering upon assurance, of its consequence is absolutely necessary.

Faith is really what we have described as
What is Faith? knowledge and belief. The word "faith" is equivalent for the Arabic word *Iman*. The meaning of the word "Iman" is to know and being convinced. The man who *knows* the oneness of God, His real attributes, His Law and Order and His system of reward and punishment, believing the same without a shadow of doubt, is called *Momin* (Faithful).

Faith in God and Obedience to Him

The object or the end of Faith is that man should totally submit to God and obey Him.

From the definition of Faith (Iman) you can understand that no man can become true Muslim without Faith. Islam to Iman is what a tree is to its seed. A tree cannot spring up without seed. It may be, of course, that after sowing the seed the tree may not have healthy growth through poverty of the soil or inclemency of the climate. In the same way it is quite impossible for a man, who has no belief to start with, to become a "Muslim." No doubt, a man might happen to have faith implanted in his heart, but through the weakness of his mind, or some defect in his brain, or wrong training, or the effect of bad company, he might not become a thorough and staunch Muslim.

From the standpoint of *Iman* and *Islam* all men can be arranged in four grades or categories :—

1. Those who have firm faith which makes them absolutely and entirely submit to God. They avoid what God dislikes as one would shrink away from fire ; they chose what God likes, fondly and fervently like one who sets to work for achieving wealth and other worldly interests. Such men are true Muslims.

2. Those who do have faith, but their faith is not strong enough to make them completely

Towards Understanding Islam

obedient to God. They are inferior to men of the first grade, but still they are Muslims. They deserve punishment and all in the position of guilty Muslims, but they are not rebels, because they acknowledge their King and His Law.

3. Those who do not possess faith at all, but their actions, in some respect, appear to confirm with God's Law. They are, however, actually rebels. Their apparent good deeds are not so through intentional submission and obedience to God, and have, therefore, no real value. Such a man is like one who neither acknowledges his king, nor submits to his law as binding to him. If any action of such a person happen to be not against the king's law, he cannot be called a loyal and obedient subject of the king. In all circumstances he will be reckoned in the category of the king's rebels.

4. Those who are utterly devoid of faith, and actually mischievous and wrong-doers. They belong to the lowest and the worst category, for they are rebels as well as disturbers of peace.

From this division of mankind into grades or categories it is evident that the real success or redemption of man depends on *Iman* (Faith). His Islam, whether flawless or defective, takes its birth from the seed of *Iman*. Where there is no *Iman* there is no Islam; it is *kufr*, in other words

Faith in God and Obedience to Him

rebellion against God, more or less.

The necessity of Iman for true submission to God has been shown to you. Now the question is, by what means can the true knowledge of God's attributes, of the Law and Order ordained by Him for mankind and of the life after death be obtained.

The means of attaining knowledge.

We have already referred to the countless manifestations of God around us and in our ownself, which bear witness to the fact that there is one and the same Maker (or Creator) and Conductor of the whole system. These monumental witnesses reflect all the divine attributes of the Creator. His great wisdom, His all-embracing knowledge, His omnipotence, His mercy, His all-sustaining power, His *force majeure*, in short all His attributes can be traced everywhere in His works, but man's wisdom and his capacity to attain knowledge have erred in observing and understanding them. These are all manifest and our eyes are open, yet someone declared that there are two gods, another professed three gods, and some other believed in countless gods. Not devoid of reason and intellect, they divided divinity into multifarious deities—god of rain, god of air, god of fire, in short a distinct god of each elemental power, and one greater god over all

Towards Understanding Islam

these sub-deities. In this way human reason has variously erred, and deceived itself, but the detailed account of these errors is out of place here.

With regard to life after death also men have put forward many erroneous notions ; for instance, man is reduced to dust after death, and will not rise to life again ; or man is continuously regenerated in this very world with the award of punishment or reward he may have deserved in his previous life.

Even greater difficulty arises when we come to the question of the Code of life. To formulate a code through mere human reason, that should coincide with God's pleasure is an extremely difficult task. If a man possesses sound sense and right wisdom in the highest degree, he might, after many years' experiments and deliberations, establish right views in matters concerning life ; still he will not have the complete assurance that he has discovered full truth.

Although the fullest and fairest test of man's wisdom, reason and knowledge might have been to leave him to his own resources without any external guidance, so that he might find out the right way of living in this world, in which case those who through their own sagacious sifting and striving might have reached truth and righteous-

Faith in God and Obedience to Him

ness would have won success and redemption, while those not reaching them would have failed. God, however, spared His human creatures such a tough test. Through His grace and benevolence He raised for mankind men from among themselves, to whom He imparted the true knowledge of His attributes, inspired the way of living here in accordance with His own pleasure, and gave true information about life in the next world. They were directed to communicate their knowledge to other men. These chosen men are the Messengers of God. They are also called Prophets. God has communicated knowledge and wisdom to them by means of *Wahy* (revelation), and the book containing the divine communications is called the Book of God, or the Word of God. Now the test of man's wisdom and intellect lies in that whether he recognises God's messenger after minutely observing his pure life and carefully studying his highest and noblest instructions. The man who possesses right wisdom and sound common-sense would verify truth and accept the instructions given by the man of truth. If he denies the Messenger of God and his teachings, his denial would signify that he was devoid of the capacity to find out truth and righteousness. On account of this denial he would fail in his test. Such a man will never be

Towards Understanding Islam

able to have the right knowledge about God and His Law, and about the life in the next world.

When you do not know a thing you look for one who knows it, and you abide by his instructions. You fall ill, for instance ; you cannot cure yourself, and you look for a medical adviser. You accept and follow his advise without question. Why ? Because he is properly qualified to give medical advice, possesses experience, and many sick persons have been cured by him. For the same reason you use whatever drug he prescribes, and administer it in the way he instructs, and you avoid whatever he forbids. Similarly in matters of Law you believe in whatever your legal adviser says, and act accordingly. In matters educational you have faith in your teacher or instructor and you accept his instructions as true. When you are about to go to some place, and you do not happen to know the way to it, you ask someone who knows it, and you follow the way he points out. In short, in all matters in connection with this life, when you do not know any thing and seek knowledge about it, you have to believe in whatever be said by one who knows it, and you are obliged to accept whatever he says. You believe, as it were, in whatever was already unknown to you. This believing, or

Faith in the Unknown.

Faith in God and Obedience to Him

having faith in what is already unknown to you, is called 'faith in the unknown' (*Iman bil ghaib*).

Iman bil ghaib, therefore, signifies that you first achieve the knowledge of what was not known to you from one who knows it. You do not know God and His attributes. You are not aware that His angels are conducting the machinery of the whole Universe according to His orders, and that they surround you on all sides, nor do you know the way to live in the world according to the pleasure of God. Also you have no correct knowledge of the conditions of life after death. Knowledge of all these matters is given to you by one whose established sincerity, integrity, trustfulness, God-fearing, the absolute purity of life, and words pregnant with wisdom make you admit that whatever he says is true, and that all his preachings are absolutely right and worth believing. This very conviction of yours is *Iman bil ghaib*. Such truth-discerning and truth-acknowledging attitude (*i.e.*, *Iman bil ghaib*) is essential for obedience to God, and for acting in accordance with His pleasure, for you have no other medium than God's Messenger for the achievement of true knowledge, and without accurate and true knowledge you cannot proceed rightly on the path of Islam.

Chapter III

THE PROPHETHOOD

The nature of Prophethood—How to know a true Prophet?—Obedience to the true Prophet—The necessity of having faith in the Prophet—Brief history of Prophethood—The Prophethood of Muhammad (God's blessings be on him!)—The proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad—The end of Prophethood—Full definition of Islam.

The following three points have been explained to you in the last chapter :—

1. For the exact obedience to God the accurate knowledge of His attributes, of the way chosen by Him of man's life in this world, and of the reward and punishment to be awarded on the Day of Judgment in the next world is absolutely necessary. This knowledge must be accompanied by, and based on, perfect assurance.

2. God has graciously spared man the tough test of acquiring this knowledge through his personal endeavour alone. In order to save him from failure, the most probable end of his personal

Towards Understanding Islam

exertions. He has relieved him by choosing some men (the Prophets) to whom He has revealed that knowledge, and whom He has commanded to convey it to other human beings.

3. Now the only responsibility upon common human beings is to know and recognize the true Prophet, and when they have recognized that such and such a man is really God's true prophet, it becomes their bounden duty to have faith in his teachings, to acknowledge and obey his instructions and to follow his footsteps in the mode of life in this world.

Now, first of all we wish to explain to you the nature of Prophethood, and the method of knowing a true Prophet.

The nature of Prophethood. You see that there is a wonderful arrangement for man to be provided with everything required by him. Observe how a new-born child is equipped—eyes to see, ears to hear, nose to smell and to breathe, the skin of the whole body for the sense of feeling by touch, feet to walk and hands to work, brain to think, and many more things, which have been provided for him before hand, foreseeing his requirements in this worldly life, all packed up in his little body. Coming in this world he finds that everything essential for his life is already provided in abundance—air, light,

The Prophethood

heat, water and earth. His food is stored in his mother's breast in the form of milk. For bringing him up properly God has implanted love for him in his parents' hearts, and in the hearts of his near relatives as well as other human beings. During his development he is provided with all that is required by him in every stage of his growth, so much so that all the powers in the universe appear to serve him.

More than this; man is blessed with all the powers, faculties and capacities required by him in his struggle for life—physical powers, intellect, understanding, speech, etc. But in this respect God has made a wonderful disposition; He has not distributed these gifts to all men equally. Their equal distribution would have made each man independent of the others, and no one would have cared for anyone else. Thus, though mankind has been blessed with all the powers and capabilities they require, God has given more of certain powers to some men, and more of certain other powers to other men. You notice that some men excel others in physical strength; some are born with greater aptitude for certain arts and professions than others, some possess greater intelligence and wisdom than others; some are born military leaders; some possess special qualities to govern; some are born with extraordinary

Towards Understanding Islam

power of speech; some are naturally excellent prose-writers; some have such a remarkable mathematical brain that they will easily solve the most intricate mathematical problems, while such problems will altogether baffle the average brains; some are born with inventive genius and their inventions strike others with wonder; some have more than ordinary legal sagacity and acumen, and they easily find out legal subtleties and intricacies which will not be understood by others even after years of thought and reflection. Such gifts are God-granted. No one can of himself produce such aptitudes. They are really intuitive, born in the nature of some men whom God has destined to be thus distinguished.

Reflecting upon this disposition of God's gifts you will also observe that a large number of men are given such abilities and capacities as are more necessary for the general humanity, and a smaller number of men are blessed with powers less commonly required by mankind. For instance, the number of soldiers is large, and so is that of peasants, carpenters, iron-mongers, etc. Similar is the case with men of other professions. But the scholars and intellectuals are comparatively fewer, and so are generals, statesmen and leaders. The top men of extraordinary capacities and genius, however, whose achievements guide huma-

The Prophethood

nity for centuries are still much less.

Let us now consider that existence of experts and specialists in Engineering, in Mathematics, in Science, in Law and Statecraft, in economics and finance, and in various other professions, is not the only necessary factor to determine the success of man's worldly life. For this purpose there is another far greater need, and that is the presence of men who may show the right way to God. Other men of knowledge only point out what is for man in this world, and how to use it. But there must be some one to tell what is man for, why has he been created? Who has provided him with all these equipments, and what is the pleasure of the Giver so that man should determine all actions of life in accordance with His pleasure, and secure sure and eternal success in life. This is man's most real and important need. Our reason refuses to believe that God, Who has provided man with even the least of his requirements, should ignore to provide for his greatest and most vital need. No, certainly it is not so. While, on the one hand, God produced men of distinction in learning and art. He raised, on the other hand, men endowed with the highest capacity to know and understand Him. To them He Himself revealed the way of godliness, morality and right conduct in life. He appointed them on the duty of commu-

Towards Understanding Islam

nicating the same Divine instructions to other men. These are the men whom we call in our language *Paighambars* (Prophets or Divine Messengers).

The men most accomplished as well as those most learned in sciences and arts are born with particularly keen intelligence and sagacity, with a special natural bent or aptitude of mind. For instance, when we read verses by a born poet we at once discern that he was born with an uncommon poetic genius, for we know that the artist poets even on trying their best cannot achieve the excellence which marks the productions of the born poet. Similarly, a born speaker, a born writer, a born inventor, and a born leader can at once be distinguished by their remarkable powers, for the work of each one of them shows a very high reach of brain in his particular sphere, quite rare among others. The same is the case with the true Prophet. His mind grasps problems which defy other minds ; he speaks and throws rare light on subjects on which no one else can speak ; he gets insight into such subtle and intricate questions that none else would have even understood after years of deep thought and meditation. Reason accepts whatever he says ; heart feels its truth ; our experiences of worldly affairs and our observa-

How to know a
true Prophet.

The Prophethood

tions of the phenomena all go to prove the truth of every word that escapes his lips. If, however, we ourselves were to try to produce the same or similar work, nothing but failure meets us. His nature and disposition are so fine and pure that in all affairs his attitude is truthful, straight and noble. He never does or says wrong, nor does he commit any evil. He always inculcates good and righteousness, and practises himself what he preaches to others. No incident of his life shows that he has acted against whatever he has taught to others. Neither his word, nor his deed, bears any personal interest. He suffers for the good of others, and never makes others suffer for his own good. His whole life is an example of truth, nobleness, purity of nature, high thinking and the most exalted form of humanity, without any defect or flaw which even the minutest search would fail to discover. The observation of all these points makes it evident that he is true Prophet of God.

When it becomes quite clear to you that such and such a person is the true Prophet of God, the acceptance of his words, obedience to him and following him in all matters becomes absolutely incumbent. It is quite against reason that you accept a man as God's true Prophet, and yet

Obedience to the Prophet.

not believe in what he says; because your very acceptance of him as God's Prophet means that you have already accepted that what he says is from God, and that whatever he does is in accordance with God's will or pleasure. Now whatever you do or say against him you do or say against God; and whatever be against God can never be true. Therefore the very acceptance of the Prophet makes it incumbent on you that you must bow to his instructions and accept them without any question whatever, whether you understand or not their wisdom or their advisability or their usefulness. The fact that an instruction has emanated from the Prophet is a sufficient guarantee for its truth, and there can be no room for doubting it. Your inability to understand it is no reason for its having flaw or defect; on the other hand it means that there must be some defect in your own understanding. It is evident that one who does not know some art thoroughly cannot understand its subtleties, but such a person would be a fool to reject what an expert says, merely on the plea that he himself does not understand the expert. It is noteworthy that in every worldly affair an expert is needed for advice, and when you turn to the expert you entirely trust his advice and depend upon it, and you do not interfere in his action. Every man.

The Prophethood

cannot, of course, be accomplished in everything, nor can he know or understand all affairs of the world. All your wisdom and shrewdness should be used to find out the most accomplished man suited to help you ; and when you are sure that a certain person is the best man available for your purpose solicit his advice and guidance, and have complete trust in him. To interfere with him at every step and say, " Make me understand it before you proceed any further " is evidently foolish. After engaging a solicitor in any legal case, if you assert such interference with him, he will simply send you out of his office. If you ask your medical advisor argument for each of his instructions he will give up your treatment. Similar is the case with religion. You need the knowledge of God ; you require to know the mode of life according to God's pleasure ; and you possess no means for obtaining this knowledge. It is incumbent upon you, therefore, to look for a True Prophet of God ; and you will have to use utmost care, discernment and sagacity in your search for him, for if you choose a wrong man for a true Prophet, he will put you in the wrong track. If, however, after properly weighing and measuring all considerations you decide definitely that a certain person is really God's Prophet, you must trust him completely and obey all his.

Towards Understanding Islam

instructions.

When it becomes known to you that a true and straight way to God is what the true Prophet declares to be from God, it becomes clear of itself that to have faith in the Prophet and to obey and to follow him is absolutely necessary for all men, and that a man who puts aside the Prophet's instructions and, through his own intellect, carves out another way for himself, deviates from the right path, and surely goes astray.

In this matter men are guilty of strange errors. There are men who admit the integrity of the Prophet, but have no faith in him, nor do they follow him. Such men are not only Kafirs, but they are also fools; for not to follow the Prophet after admitting him to be true means that one knowingly follows untruth. Can folly go farther than this!

Some people declare that we are in no need of a prophet, we would ourselves find out the way to truth. This attitude is also a great error. You have probably learnt Geometry, and you know that between two points there can be only one straight line, and all other lines must be crooked; and other straight lines drawn from one of them must all pass away from the other. The same is the case with

The Prophethood

the way to truth, which, in the technical language of Islam, is called *sirat-i-mustaqim* (the straight path). This path begins from man and goes straight up to God, and according to the above-mentioned axiom (truth) that path can only be one ; no other way than that will ever reach God. Now think that this straight path has been indicated by the Prophet, and that there can be no straight path beside that. The man who ignores that path and seeks another is only a dupe of his own imagination. He chooses a way and imagines it to be right, but he soon finds himself entangled in the mazes and meanderings created by his own fancy, and is lost altogether. What can you think of a person who has lost his way and whom a good man shows the straight way, but he defiantly ignores the latter's guidance, declaring, "I will not take up the way you have shown to me, but I will choose some other way, though it may involve hardships, I will persist and reach the object of my search ? "

This is a common error, which a mere cursory view can detect. But if you go a little deeper into the matter, you will notice that a person who denies to have faith in the true Prophet cannot at all find any way, straight or not, to reach God. The reason is that with the brain of a person who refuses to believe in the word of a

Towards Understanding Islam

truthful man there must be something amiss, which makes him turn away from truth. His understanding may be defective ; there may be pride in his heart ; his nature may be so perverse that he is not prepared to accept anything good or true ; he may be obstinate in the blind following of his forefathers, and not willing to listen to any criticism against his old traditions ; he may be a slave of his desires, and refuses to accept the teachings of the Prophet for the reason that to believe in them would be to destroy his own freedom of action and to keep himself from the gratification of his improper and sinful desires. If any of the above-mentioned conditions exist in a man, it is absolutely impossible for him to find the right way to God. For a man free from such conditions, if he is truth-loving and good and possesses sound brain and common-sense, there is absolutely no reason to refuse to accept the teachings of the true Prophet.

The greatest of all questions is that the true Prophet is raised by God Himself for mankind, appointed to convey to them His Message of Truth ; it is God's command that His Messenger should be believed and obeyed. One who does not believe in God's Messenger is, therefore, a rebel. In this world you are obliged to obey the governor of the King of whom you are

The Prophethood

a subject: if you refuse to acknowledge the King's governor, your attitude would be tantamount to revolt against the King himself. To acknowledge the King and to disobey his Agents are contradictions, and cannot co-exist. God is the real King of mankind—the King of all Kings. It is the bounden duty of every man to acknowledge duly the man whom He has sent as His Messenger, and He has commanded men to obey him and follow him as His accredited Prophet. Man, therefore, must disown and denounce other beings and have no more relation with them. One who turns away from the Prophet of God is surely a kafir, be he a believer in God or a disbeliever.

Now we propose to mention to you how the chain of Prophethood began among mankind, and how its gradual development ended in the last and the greatest Prophet.

Brief history of Prophethood. You may have heard that God first created only one man, and from that man he created his spouse. Then God let this pair be multiplied, until after the lapse of countless centuries their descendants spread over the earth. All men born in this world have descended from the same pair. All historical traditions and all religions agree that mankind began from one man only. Scienti-

Towards Understanding Islam

fic investigations about the origin of man have not proved that different men were first made in different parts of the globe. The great men of science also conjecture that one man would have been brought to existence first and that all mankind existing on the earth to-day are the descendants of the same one man.

In our language the first man is called Adam, which has given rise to the word *adami* (human being), which has the same implication as *insan* (mankind). God made Adam the first Prophet, revealed to him Islam, and commanded him to communicate the same to his descendants, *i.e.*, to teach them that Allah (God) had created them as well as the whole world, that Him alone they should worship, that before Him alone they should bow their heads in homage, that to him alone they should appeal for help, that they should live good and righteous lives in accordance with God's pleasure, and that if they did so, they would be blessed by God with goodly reward, and if they turned away from obedience to Him, they would be severely punished.

Those of Adam's descendants who were good trod the right path shown to them by him, but those who were bad abandoned their father's teachings, and gradually drifted away into devious ways. Some began to worship the sun, the moon

The Prophethood

and the stars ; others took to the worship of trees, animals and rivers. Some believed that air, water, fire, health and all the blessings and forces of Nature were each under the control of a different god and that each one of them should be propitiated by means of worship. In this way ignorance gave rise to many forms of idol-worship and of associating in worship with God many minor deities. Scores of religions were formulated. This was the age when Adam's progeny had spread fairly all over the globe, and formed different races and nations. Every nation had made a different religion for itself, each with formalities and ritualism of its own. God—the one Lord and Creator of mankind and the Universe—was altogether forgotten. Not only that, but Adam's descendants forgot even the Law of life in the world, which their great progenitor had taught them. They had followed their own devices. Every kind of evil custom grew, and all sorts of notions of ignorance spread among them. They began to err in discerning right from wrong ; many wrong things were considered right and many right things were considered wrong.

At this stage God began to raise Prophets among every people, who preached Islam to them. Each one reminded their respective people of the lesson they had forgotten. They taught them

Towards Understanding Islam

God-worship, put an end to idol-worship and associating other deities with God, did away with all customs of ignorance, taught them the right way of living in accordance with God's pleasure, and formulating right Laws instructed the people to follow them. God's true Prophets were raised in all countries, India, China, Persia, Iraq, Egypt, Africa, Europe, and every other land on the earth. They had all one and the same religion, the religion which we call Islam in our language. No doubt, the methods of the Prophet's teaching and the Laws regulating life were different according to the people among whom a Prophet was raised. The teaching was determined by the kind of ignorance which it was intended to dispel. The methods of reform differed as it suited to eradicate different notions and ideas. When the people were in the primitive stages of society, of knowledge, of civilization and intellectual development their instructions and laws were simple, and they were modified and improved as the people made progress. These differences were, however, only superficial and apparent. The fundamental principle of all the religions was the same, *i.e.*, belief in one only God, the certainty of reward and punishment hereafter, and all actions in the life good, peaceful, moderate and sensible.

Man's attitude towards God's Prophets has

The Prophethood

been strange. First they maltreated the Prophets, and refused to listen to them and accept their instructions. Some of the Prophets were expelled from their lands ; some were assassinated ; some, in face of the people's indifference, continued preaching the whole of their lives, and hardly procured more than a few followers. In the midst of harassing opposition, derision and indignity to which they were perpetually subjected, these agents of God. however, did not cease to preach. Their patient determination at last succeeded ; their teachings did not remain without effect. Large groups of people and nations accepted their claims, and were converted. The erring tendencies of the people born of centuries of persistence in deviation, ignorance and malpractices, now took another form. Though during the lives of their Prophets they accepted and practised their teachings, yet after their death they introduced their old distorted notions into their religions, and altered the Prophet's teachings. They adopted quite novel methods of worshipping God ; some even took to the worship of their Prophets. Some made the Prophets the incarnations of God ; some made their prophet the son of God ; some associated their Prophets with God in His Divinity. In short man's varied attitudes in this respect were an irony of his reason and a mockery of himself :

he made idols of the very persons whose holy mission had been to break idols. By intermixing, in religion customs and ritualism of ignorance, baseless and false anecdotes and man-made laws, men so changed, and continued changing, the laws originally promulgated by their Prophets that after the lapse of centuries it could not be ascertained what portion of the law claimed to be sacred was the original teaching of the Prophet and what portion of it was the subsequently interpolated matter. Not only this, but the accounts of the lives of the Prophets became so mixed up with traditions and anecdotes that nothing of their doings remained that could be relied upon. Still the works of the Prophets have not been altogether in vain. Among all nations, in spite of all interpolations and alterations, some traces of Truth have survived. The idea of God and of the life after death was definitely shaped in some form or another. A few principles of goodness, truthfulness and morality were commonly admitted throughout the whole world. The Prophets, thus, prepared the mental attitude of their respective people in such a way that a universal religion (or common religion, *i.e.*, one which would be quite in consonance with the natural make of mind, and would, therefore, be natural or commonly

The Prophethood

acceptable by mankind), for the whole mankind could be safely introduced.

As we have said above, in the beginning separate prophets used to appear among different nations or groups of people, and the teaching of each prophet was meant specially for his people. The reason was that at that age these people were situated separately and cut off from each other, each one bound hard and fast within the geographical limits of their own territories and without any facilities for intercourse with the others. In such circumstances it was very difficult to propagate a common World-Faith with its accompanying system of law for the life of this world. Besides, the general conditions of the early nations were widely different from each other. Their ignorance was great, and it had given different forms to their moral aberrations and distortions of Faith among different people. It was, therefore, necessary that different prophets be raised to preach the Truth to them and win them over to God's ways, gradually demolishing all errors and wrong ideas, and substitute for them the right ones, to root out the ways and modes of ignorance and teach them to practise the best principles of high and noble life, and thus train and bring them up like children. God knows how many thousands of years would have

Towards Understanding Islam

been spent in thus educating those nations, and developing them intellectually. Anyhow man continued to make progress, and at last the time arrived when mankind grew from their infancy, and were entering the years of maturity. With the progress and spread of commerce, industry and art, intercourse was established between the nations. From China and Japan as far as the distant lands of Europe and Africa regular routes were opened both by sea and by land. Many people learnt the art of writing ; knowledge and arts spread. There was exchange of general ideas on topics of learning. Great conquerors appeared, extended their conquests far and wide, established vast empires, and knit many different nations under one political system. Thus nations became closer and closer to each other, and their differences became less and less. It became possible under these circumstances that one and the same faith and a system of having both religious and secular elements, like Islam, be sent by God for all mankind. More than 2,000 years before now mankind has made such a general progress that they all seemed to demand one common religion. Buddhism, though it consisted only of some moral principles, and was not a complete system of religion, emerged from India, and spread as far as Japan and Mongolia, on one side, and as far as Afghanistan.

The Prophethood

and Bokhara, on the other. Its missionaries travelled far and wide in the world. A few centuries later Christianity appeared, founded by Jesus Christ, who declared in clear terms that his religion was meant only for the Israelites. In face of this, however, the Christians spread it from Persia up to the distant climes of Europe and Africa. From these events it is clearly inferred that the conditions of mankind in that age demanded a common religion for the whole human race, *i.e.*, they were so far prepared for it that when they found no complete and true religion in existence they began to propagate among their nations the existing newly formed religions lacking in completeness and weak in principles.

At such a critical time when the mind of the human world was hankering for a complete religious system, a Prophet was raised in Arabia for the whole world and for all nations of mankind. He was given Islam with its perfect teachings and a complete system of individual as well as collective life of man, and was appointed on the mission of propagating it in the whole world.

The Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Have a look at the map and geography of the world. A cursory survey of it will show to you that no other country is more suitable than Arabia

for world-Prophethood. It is situated right in the middle of Asia and Africa, and Europe is not far from it. At the time of Muhammad's appearance the civilized and socially advanced nations of Europe inhabited the southern part of that continent, lands as distant from Arabia as Hindustan.

Then, read the world history of that period. You will find that there was no other people more suited for this Prophethood than the Arabs. Great nations of the world had been struggling hard for world-supremacy, and in this long struggle they had to draw upon all their resources. Now they had become exhausted, and were not prepared to keep up that struggle any more. The Arabs were a fresh and virile people. Social progress had produced bad habits among the advanced nations, while among the Arabs no such improved social organization existed, and they were, therefore, free from the inactivity, debasement and indulgences arising from luxury and sensual satiety. The Christian Arabs of the 6th century had not been effected by the evil influence of the high social system and civilization of the great nations of the earth. They possessed all the good human qualities which a people untouched by the "Social progress" of the time ought to possess. They were brave, fearless, generous, faithful to their promises, lovers of freedom, and not slaves to any

The Prophethood

other nation. They lived a very simple life, and were strangers to the life of luxury and indulgence. No doubt there were certain undesirable aspects of their life, as we will mention later on, but the reason for the existence of such aspects was that for thousands of years no prophet had risen among them, nor had a reformer appeared who might have civilized them and corrected their morality. Centuries' free and independent life in sandy deserts had fed and nourished extreme ignorance among them. They had, therefore become so hard-hearted and firm in their traditions of ignorance that to make them human was not the task of an ordinary man. At the same time, however, they did possess a capacity that if some person of extraordinary powers were to invite them for reform and point out some great and noble object for their goal, they would accept his call and readily rise to act effectively for the achievement of such a goal, and during their struggle even upset the whole world for their purpose if it had been necessary. It was such a young, forceful and virile people that were needed for disseminating the teachings of the world-Prophet.

After these considerations note the Arabic language. If you learn that language, and study its literature, you will be convinced that there is no other language more fit than Arabic to give

expression to high ideals, to explain the most delicate and subtle problems of Divine knowledge, and to impress the heart. Short phrases and sentences express a world of ideas, and at the same time they are so forceful that they pierce the heart like a lancet or an arrow. They are so sweet that it is felt as if honey were being poured into ears; they are so full of harmony that the listener is impelled to swing about and keep the rhythm. It is such a rich language that was needed for the Quran, the Great Word of God.

It was, therefore, the manifestation of God's great wisdom that He chose the land of Arabia for the birth-place of the world-Prophet. Let us now see how unique and extraordinary was the blessed personality chosen by God for the mission of the world-Prophet.

Go back in history for one thousand and four

**Proof of the
Prophethood of
Muhammad
(God's blessings
be upon him).**

hundred years, and see what the conditions of the world were, at that period. No telegraph, no newspapers and journals, no telephone, no railway train, no press,

no printing of books, nor the modern facilities of travelling, etc. Travelling from one country to another was a few months' journey. In these conditions the land of Arabia was quite cut off from all countries. It was surrounded by Persia,

The Prophethood

Turkey and Egypt, where art and learning more or less existed, but great deserts of sand had separated them all from Arabia. Arab traders had to travel for months on their camels to reach those countries for trading purposes. This connection was, however, only confined to trade, buying and selling commodities, and had no other effect. Arabia boasted of no high social organisation ; it had neither any school, nor any library. The people were generally without any desire for knowledge. Arabs who could read and write could be counted on fingers, and their knowledge did not at all extend to the Arts and Sciences current in other countries. They had no Law, no organized government. They were a tribal people ; and tribes were independent of each other, and robbed each other without the least compunction. Blood feuds leading to regular fights and blood shed were only too common. Human life was of no value, and whenever any person could, he would kill another man with impunity, and take possession of his property. They were absolutely devoid of morality and civilization. Evil deeds, wine drinking and gambling were the order of the day. Men would take off their clothes before others without any shame, and became quite naked ; during the circumambulation of their temple Kaaba even women strapped themselves.

naked. They made no distinction between clean and unclean food. Their sense of individual freedom was so acute that no one was prepared to subject or bind himself to any rule, or law, or any system of morality, nor could he accept obedience to any governor. Along with it the degree of ignorance was such that all the Arab people worshipped stones. If an Arab chanced to spy in some path a nice smooth piece of stone, he would at once pick it up, place it before himself and worship it. It is strange that necks which would yield to no man were readily bent before stones. It was believed that stones provided their votaries anything solicited from them.

In the midst of such people and such conditions a man made appearance. His parents and grandfather had died while he was still a child. He was, therefore, totally deprived even of the little training he might have received from his parents. When he grew and advanced towards maturity he began to graze goats with Arab boys. As a youth he occupied himself in trade. His companions and associates were always the same Arabs whose conditions we have already portrayed. He had no education ; he could not even read or write. In spite of this his habits, his moral sense and his ideas were altogether different from those of his people. He never lied, nor did he ever speak roughly to any-

The Prophethood

one. Instead of roughness or harshness his tongue possessed sweet gentleness to such an extent that all turned to him fondly. He never took a penny from anyone unless it were his own right. He was, and became known, so honest that people deposited their valuable property with him, and he took as much care of it as he would take of his own life. All the people trusted his honesty, and they called him *Al-Ameen* (The Trustee). He was so modest that after his childhood no one ever saw him naked. His moral sense was so deep that he never glared at a woman. He had such a pure nature that in spite of his having been brought up among a people with impure and evil manners, he shunned all impurity and bad manners, and he was clean and pure in all his actions. The purity of his ideas was such that the sight of robbery or fight with bloodshed pained him deeply, and on the occasions of fight he always tried to bring about peace between the parties. He was so soft-hearted and full of sympathy that he joined every person in trouble and shared his grief, that he helped the orphans and the widows, and that he fed the hungry—and gave food to the passerby. He gave trouble to none, and himself suffered for the sake of others. His reason and judgment were so sound that in spite of living with idol-worshippers he hated idols. He never bent his head

before any of God's creation. Something within himself spoke to him, "nothing of whatever you observe in the heavens or on the earth is worthy to be worshipped." His heart bore witness that God could only be one, and surely there must be only one God. Among these ignorant people his personality appeared distinguished like diamond in a heap of stones, or like a burning candle in the midst of pitch dark gloom.

After forty years of clean, pure and highly noble life he became sick of the enveloping gloom which long abiding ignorance had spread over the lives of his people. He was anxious to get out of the persistent and fearful storm, howling all about him, of evil deeds, disorders, idol-worship, association of others with God in His divinity, and other revolting attitudes of his people, for therein he found nothing to accord with his attitudes and his measures. At last he retired from their habitations, and found shelter in a cave of a mountain, where he spent days and days in solitude and in peace. By starvation and by abstemiousness, he further purged and purified his soul, his heart and his brain. By deep thought and meditation he sought some light by which he might dispel the clouds of perpetual darkness overhanging his country and its people; he desired some force by which he might upset and destroy the world of

The Prophethood

wicked measures and disordered thought, and set up in its place a healthy and reformed structure of human life on divinely sanctioned measures.

In the midst of these profound meditations suddenly a grand spiritual revolution overtook his mind. At once the light which his nature was seeking and probing for appeared to him. With the same suddenness he felt that he was filled with a force which he had never before experienced or manifested. He emerged from the cave, turned to his people and exhorted them—"Your idols are of no good, therefore give them up. The earth, the moon, the sun, the stars, together with their forces and powers have all been created by God; He is also your Creator, and He provides maintenance to all. He gives life, and He it is that takes it away. Turn away from all things, and worship God alone, and solicit His help alone. Robbing and plundering, wine-drinking and gambling—evil deeds of which you are guilty—are all sinful. Give them up and shun them, for God does not like them. Always speak and practice truth, be fair and just in dealings, do not take away any man's life or his property. Whatever you take, take by right, and whatever you give away, give by right. You are all men, and men are all equal. Greatness and nobility are not due merely to descent from the progenitor of mankind, or from

some distinguished tribe or race of it, nor is it necessarily associated with colour, features or wealth ; it arises from God-fearing, goodness, cleanliness and mental purity. Whoever fears God and possesses goodness and purity is the highest kind of man ; and whoever is not so is nothing, *i.e.*, has no worth after death. You shall all have to appear in the presence of God, Who is just Judge, and before Whom neither intercession nor recompense will be of any avail, nor will a man's descent be asked, as it is worthless. All that will be required there is Faith and good deeds. Whoever be their happy possessor will go to Paradise, and whoever be unfortunately without either of them will be thrown into hell."

The ignorant people of Muhammad's time began to maltreat and harass him for preaching to them what was against the religion of their forefathers. They abused, taunted and stoned him, and made life hard and unbearable for him. They even conspired against his life. Not for a day or two, but continually for thirteen long years, they subjected him to the cruellest indignities, until he was obliged to be an exile from his birth-place. But even after his emigration they did not allow him rest ; they continued worrying and harassing him there. Why did he put up with so much troubles and annoyances ? Simply because

he wished to show to his people the straight path to Truth. His people seeing his firm resolution were ready to offer him kingship over themselves, and lay heaps of wealth at his feet, provided he gave up his new teaching. He flung away all these offers, and remained firm in his determination of preaching the unity of God.

Can you imagine greater goodness and sincerity of purpose than that of a man who undergoes unexampled hardships, not for his personal interest, but merely in the pursuit of doing good to others? And who were those others? The very same people whose good he sought, and for whose interest he struggled hard, flung stones at him, while he, in response, prayed God to forgive and bless them?

Note particularly that when Muhammad came out of the cave with the light of knowledge revealed to him, what an immense change or revolution appeared in him. After that his speeches to the people were so clear, eloquent and full of diction that none before had reached their height of expression, nor could any man do so after that. The Arabs had been justly proud of their verse, their addresses and their great eloquence. He challenged them to produce one small verse or phrase like his speech, but all inclined their heads forward as an admission of their incapability to do

Towards Understanding Islam

so. Stranger still that his own ordinary conversational language and his explanations were also inferior in style to the special speeches which he declared to be exquisitely unique and unparalleled. At the present time when we compare those speeches with his own expressions, a clear and palpable difference is found between the two.

An unlettered dweller of the desert, he began to utter such expressions of wisdom and philosophy that no man had uttered the like of them before, nor has none been able to do so since then.

That illiterate man formulated laws about morality, social life, domestic economy, civil polity and the common matters of human life, laws so far-sighted and based on the true eternal principles of life in this world and in the next, that the wisest and the most learned of men after years of deep thought and the experiences of ages are just able to have a little inkling of their true significance ; the truth of the subtle underlying principles is still unfolding itself. More than 1,300 years have elapsed since, but to-day also there appears no room for amendment in those laws. Thousands of times, in the meantime, men have made laws for themselves, amended, reamended and repealed them, but each time such laws failed in the test, and each time they had to be altered. The laws which this unlettered Saharadweller had formulated

The Prophethood

without the help of any man, however, do not contain even an article which could be removed from the position already allotted to it.

Through his personal goodness, gentleness and nobleness, and through the power of his excellent teachings, during the period of 23 years of Prophethood, he made friends of his foes, and secured adherence of his opponents. Great forces had risen against him, but they were ultimately defeated and lay at his feet. When he conquered and had full power he never sought vengeance from his enemies, nor did he treat anyone harshly. After victory he forgave even those who had assassinated his uncle, and had eaten his liver ; he gave pardon to those who had stoned him and forced him to leave his own country. He never deceived anyone ; he never broke promise. He was never cruel to anyone in battle ; even his inveterate foes could not lay the charge of sin or cruelty against him. It was this, his attitude of extreme goodness and fairness, that won for him the heart of all Arabia. He was known to be well-wisher of his enemies. It was the interest of their welfare that actuated him in every act. Above all he persisted in his teachings and preachings to his country, and at last succeeded in taking his people out of barbarism and ignorance, and raising them to a very high civilization.

Those people who had never been prepared to be bound and tied by any law, he made so law-abiding and disciplined that no nation in the world equalled them in that respect. The Arabs who had never seemed even to suffer subjection to any rule were now made subjects of a glorious government. The morally debased and degenerated Arabs rose to be examples of such moral purity that their accounts even to-day strike the reader with wonder. The nation which had been before Muhammad's advent in the lowest grade of humanity, through Muhammad's influence alone, during a brief period of 23 years, rose suddenly to such power and eminence that they totally upset the great empires of Persia, Rome and Egypt, and taught the world the lessons of economy and principles of domestic life, civilization, morality and humanity. With the knowledge of Islam and its Law, they spread into Asia, Africa and Europe even to their remote corners. These were the effects of the teaching of Islam on the Arab people themselves.

More surprisingly wonderful are the effects of the instructions of this unlettered Teacher on the whole world. It revolutionised the ideology, the habits and the laws current in the world. Let those alone who accepted his teachings and became Muslims. The most striking phenomenon is

The Prophethood

that even those who had denied him, and were his opponents, could not escape the absorbing effect of his teachings. The world had forgotten the lesson of *Tauheed* (the Unity of godhead). It was Muhammad that recalled to them the same forgotten and neglected lesson, and he blew its world-trumpet with such extraordinary strength and force of will that even the idol-worshippers and the various followers of adulterated Divine Unity to-day are forced to claim pure and absolute unity of God. The principles of his moral code are so convincingly beneficial that they were taken up by other nations, and are now spreading in the world. His principles of Law, Civil Polity, Civilization and Social Economy were so true and eternally applicable that even the hostile critics of Islam have quietly borrowed, and are still borrowing, from them.

As you have already been told this extraordinary man belonged to a barbarous people and to a land under a very old and heavy gloom of ignorance. He had followed no other occupation than that of a herdsman and a trader. He had received no education, no training of any kind. It is wonderful to think, however, how after attaining the age of forty years so many accomplishments so suddenly appeared in him. Whence did he attain such knowledge? Whence did that great

wonderful power spring into him ? After that time, though he was apparently one and the same person, at one time he played the role of an extraordinary commander-in-chief ; on other occasions he was judge of great legal acumen ; on others he was a legislator of the first degree ; on others, a philosopher of unique thought ; on others, a reformer of social and moral life ; on others still, an astonishingly shrewd expert in state-craft. Along with so many engagements he kept awake for hours every night, busy in worshipping the Lord ; he fulfilled what was due to every member of his large family ; he also helped and served the poor and the trouble-stricken. Though he was acknowledged the king of the country, yet he lived simply like a poor man, slept on a rush-mat, wore coarse clothes, partook of food like one who has no means ; nay, occasionally he passed time without any food.

After showing these superhuman accomplishments, had he claimed to be a personality of higher degree than man, no one would have rejected the claim. But do you know what he declared ? He did not claim his accomplishments to have been his personal achievements, but he always declared :—

“ I have nothing of my own ; it is all God’s and from God. God’s great Word I have placed

The Prophethood

before you, and have challenged you to produce the like of it, and you have all found yourselves incapable to compose the like of it. It is not my own speech or my own composition, but it is the Word of God to Whom all praise for it is due. What appears to you as my work, which you might be attributing to me, is not due to any special capacity or faculty within me, but it is achieved solely through God's guidance. I do and say only what I am directed by God to do or to say."

Consider now the position of this man of truth. How can we refuse to accept such an extraordinary personality as the True Prophet of God? His accomplishments have been unequalled in the history of man up to the present day; still he was such a great lover of truth that he took no pride in his possession of them, nor did he claim any praise for himself, but he clearly and unequivocably gave all praise to Him Who had granted them to him, and Who was their real source. Why should we not accept and confirm his truth? When regarding his excellences he declared definitely that they were not the product of his own brain, but that they were God-given, why should we say, "no, they are all the outcome of your own brain". A liar always tries to secure for himself even the credit for others' merits. This man, however, insisted upon not attributing to

himself even his own merits, which he could have easily claimed to be his own, and such a claim could not have been rejected by anyone, especially when no one knew, or could know, how he had achieved them, and he could easily claim to be a superhuman being, and none had any reason to prove to the contrary. Now consider and decide for yourself. You will, no doubt, conclude that no man can be more truthful than he was.

Know that this man, a prodigy of extraordinary merits, is Muhammad (Mustafa, God's blessings be upon him!) the last Prophet of God to mankind, the true World-Prophet. His own truth, never alloyed with personal pretensions, is the unimpeachable argument for his Prophethood. His glorious achievements, his over-courteous manners, the events of his pure life, are all proved by history. The heart of any person who studies them with clean conscience, fairness and love for truth, will of itself bear witness that assuredly he is the true Prophet of God. The Word which he announced to the people is the same Quran (the Book of God, or the Word of God) which you read daily in your house. Whoever studies this book with open and unbiased heart will have to admit that it must be the Book of God. No man can compose or write such a book.

The Prophethood

**The end of
Prophethood.**

You ought to know now that in this age there is no other medium for knowing the right and straight path of Islam than the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !). Muhammad is the Prophet or Messenger of God for the whole mankind. The world-old line of God's true Prophets ended with him. All the instructions which it was God's will to impart to mankind were sent by Him through His last Prophet. Now, whoever be a seeker for truth and anxious to be a true Muslim creature (or servant) of God, it is incumbent on him to have faith in God's last Prophet, accept his teachings, and follow the way he has pointed out to be right and straight.

We have already mentioned to you the nature of Prophethood. After understanding it when you think of it rather seriously, you will know that the advent of a Prophet is not an everyday occurrence. There should be a true Prophet at some age for every people. The life of a prophet is really an example for teaching and guiding others. As long as his teachings and his guidance are living he is, as it were, alive himself. The Prophets before him have died, for their followers have interpolated the instructions the Prophets had communicated to them. Not

one of the books which they had brought with themselves exists to-day in its original context. The followers of these Prophets do not claim to possess the original books of their Prophets. On the other hand, they have altogether forgotten the teachings of their Prophets. Of no Prophet gone before an accurate and trustworthy account can be found anywhere to-day. It cannot even be said for certain in what age and where they had been born, what they did and how they lived, what they taught to be done and what they prohibited from. *This is their death.*

Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!) is, however, alive, because his complete teachings and his guidance exist to-day, and are still alive. The Quran he gave to mankind exists in its original words, without the slightest difference of a letter or a dot or a vowel sign. The account of his life, his sayings and his doings are all preserved, and even after the lapse of 13 centuries their delineation in history is so clear and complete that we see him, as it were, actually with our own eyes. The biography of no man in the world is so well and fully preserved in history as that of Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!). In every matter of our life we can take a lesson from his life. This is the reason why no prophet is needed after Muhammad, the last

The Prophethood

Prophet and the world-Prophet.

There are only three conditions to necessitate the advent of a new Prophet after another has passed away :—

1. If the teachings and instructions of the Prophet, who has passed away die, and their revival be needed.
2. If the teachings of the Prophet who has passed away be incomplete, and it be necessary to amend them, or to add to them.
3. If the Prophet who has passed away had been raised particularly for a certain nation, or a group of people, and a prophet for another nation, or a group of people, be required.

In this age these three conditions have all disappeared. The teachings and instructions of the last true Prophet, Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !), are still living, as we have already mentioned. His teachings and instructions about Islam were complete and without any flaw, as stated in the Quran (" to-day I have perfected your faith—religion—for you, and completed My bounties upon you "). A thorough investigation into Islam as a complete institution for life in this world and the next world proves the Quranic words quoted above to be quite right. The third condition fell to the ground just on the appearance of Muhammad, the last

Towards Understanding Islam

true Prophet and the world-Prophet, for he was sent so not to any particular nation, but he was raised for the whole mankind as the world-Prophet. After him there remained no need for a new prophet for any people in the world. Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) has been commanded in the Quran to declare, "O mankind, I am God's Messenger to all of you." For the same reason he has been referred to in the Quran as *Khatim-un-Nabiyyn* (the finisher, or the last, of the chain of the true prophets").

Now, therefore, whatever we can know of the Faith of Islam we can know **Full definition of Islam.** only through Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !). Have faith in him ; have faith in the Quran ; have faith in God's attributes and his angels, as mentioned by Muhammad ; have faith in the life hereafter about reward and punishment to be awarded thereon, as described by the Prophet ; follow the mode of life in accordance with God's pleasure, as indicated in the sayings and doings of the Prophet.

This is Islam, and whatever be beside it is *kufr*, rebellion against God.

Chapter IV

ARTICLES OF FAITH

The detailed Faith

Faith in God—The meaning of *La ilaha illallah*—The real sense of *La ilaha illallah*—The effect of the belief in the Unity of God on man's life—Belief in the angels of God—Belief in the Books of God—Belief in the Prophets (Messengers) of God—Belief in the Day of Judgment—The necessity of belief in the Day of Judgment—The truth of the belief in the Day of Judgment—*Kalimah-i-Tayyibah* (Good Word)—Islam in a nut-shell.

Before proceeding further it is better to recapitulate briefly what has been said in previous chapters.

(1) No doubt, Islam does not mean more than submission and obedience to God, but as the only source of knowing His attributes, and His chosen path and the day of His judgment is the teaching of His Prophet, therefore the accurate definition of the Faith of Islam is :—to have faith in the teachings of the Prophet, and to

Towards Understanding Islam

follow his ways in life. One who ignores the medium of the Prophet, and claims submission and obedience directly to God, is not a "Muslim."

(2) In old times there were separate Prophets for different nations, and in one and the same nation also several Prophets appeared one after another. In that age Islam was the name of that religion which was taught to a nation by its own Prophet or Prophets. Though the nature of Islam was one and the same in every age and in every country, but their Laws, *i.e.*, the code of the laws of Life and their modes of worship, were different. It was not, therefore, necessary for any nation to follow another nation's Prophets.

(3) When Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!) was raised as Prophet, the Islamic teachings were made complete through him, and one Law was formulated for the whole world. His Prophethood was not meant for any particular nation or any particular country, but it was, and is, intended for all mankind and for all ages. All the laws promulgated by the Prophets before him were abrogated on the advent of Muhammad, and neither any Prophet is to appear in future, nor any new religious code is to be given till the last day of this world. Now Islam is nothing other than to follow Muhammad, *viz.*, to acknowledge his Prophethood, and on his authority to

Articles of Faith

believe in all that he has instructed men to believe, and to submit to all his commands and ordinances as those of God.

Now let us see what Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) has instructed us to believe, or to have faith in, how true are these articles of Faith, and how is man's merit raised by belief in them.

The first and the most important lesson **Faith in God.** taught by Muhammad is *La ilaha illallah* (there is no *ilah* (deity) to be worshipped—but *Allah*.)

This fine phrase is the foundation of Islam. It is this expression which differentiates a true Muslim from a *kafir* (unbeliever), a *mushrik* (one who associates others with God in His divinity), or a *dahriya* (atheist). The acceptance or denial of this phrase produces a world of difference between man and man. The believers in it become one solid nation, and those who do not believe in it form another group. For those who believe in it there is continued progress, success and distinction in this world right on to the next world ; and failure, debasement and fall are ultimately the lot of those who do not believe in it. But this great difference between man and man cannot be determined by the mere utterance of these words. If you go on repeating " quinine,"

Towards Understanding Islam

for instance, you will not get rid of your malaria. In the same manner, if you utter the words *La ilaha illallah*, but you do not understand their sense, and do not know what heavy responsibility their profession has laid on you, such an unperceived expression is of no use. The difference between one man and the other man will be manifested only when one of them grasps their full sense, i.e., their real significance is perceived by him and takes firm root in his heart, he has a complete assurance of its reality, his heart becomes entirely purged of all contrary beliefs, and its effect on his heart and brain is deep enough at last to become its virtue, just as burning is the virtue of fire, or killing is the virtue of poison. In other words, just as your belief in the burning quality of fire prevents you from putting your hand in it, or your belief in the killing virtue of poison keeps you from taking poison, so should this belief make you avoid even the slightest form of *kufr* or *shirk* or *dahriyat*, be it in act or in belief.

In Arabic language the word *ilah* means *maabud* (one worshipped), i.e.,
The meaning of *La ilaha illallah*. a being which on account of its greatness and power be considered worthy to be worshipped, to be bowed to in humility and submission. Anything or being

Articles of Faith

possessing powers too great to be comprehended by man is also called *ilah*. The conception of *ilah* also includes the possession of infinitive powers, so that all beings in the world be in need of it, and be obliged to solicit its help. The word *ilah* also carries a sense of mystery, that is, *ilah* would be a being possessing mysterious powers. The word *khuda* in Persian, *deota* in Hindi and god in English, bear, more or less, similar signification. Other languages of the world also contain words with a like sense.

The word *Allah* is really the essential personal name of God. *La ilaha illallah* would literally mean "there is no *ilah* (deity) worth worshipping other than the great being known by the name *Allah*." It means that in the whole of the universe there is absolutely no being worthy to be worshipped other than *Allah*, before Whom heads should bow in submission and adoration, that He is the only being possessing all powers, that all are in need of His favours, and that all are obliged to solicit His help. He is concealed from our senses, and our intellect fails to perceive what He is.

Having known the meanings of these words, let us now find out their real sense.

From the most ancient known history of

Towards Understanding Islam

man as well as from the oldest relics of antiquity that we have been able to obtain, it appears that in every age man had made for himself some deity or deities, and had worshipped them. Even in the present age every nation on the face of the earth, from the most primitive to the most civilized, does believe in, and worship, some deity. It shows that the idea of having a deity and worshipping it is ingrained in human nature. There is something within him which forces him to do so.

What is that thing within man? Look within yourself, and look at the real state of the humankind; and you may be able to find the answer to this question. Man is neither self existent, nor self sufficient, nor, by his nature, self confident. He is not omnipotent as you may see yourself. He is really needy, frail and destitute. There are countless things necessary to maintain his existence, but they are not within his power. Sometimes they come to his possession of themselves, and sometimes he finds himself deprived of them. There are many things of use to him, which he endeavours to get, but sometimes he succeeds to get them, and sometimes he does not, for it is not completely in his power to obtain possession of them. There are many things injurious to him; accidents destroy all his life-work in a

Articles of Faith

single moment; chances bring his hopes to a sudden end; diseases, worries, calamities and fatalities always threaten him and mar his way to happiness. He attempts to get rid of them; sometimes he succeeds, and sometimes he fails. There are many things by the greatness and grandeur of which he is awed, such as mountains and rivers, gigantic animals and ferocious beasts. He experiences earthquakes, storms of wind and of water. He sees the appearance of clouds, and notices them gathering thick and dark, with the peals of thunder, the flashes of lightning, and the continuous fall of heavy rain. He sees the sun, the moon and the stars moving on constantly. He reflects how great, powerful and grand these bodies are, and, in contrast to them, how frail and insignificant he himself is. This phenomena along with the consciousness of himself, bound and constrained in so many ways, impresses him with a deep sense of his own weakness, humbleness and helplessness. And it is quite natural that the preliminary idea of divinity coincides with this sense. He thinks of those hands who are wielding these great powers. The sense of their greatness makes him bow in humility. The sense of their powerfulness makes him sue their help. He tries to please them so that they may be beneficent to him, and he dreads them and tries to escape their

Towards Understanding Islam

wrath so that he may not be destroyed by them.

In the lowest state of ignorance man thinks that the great objects of nature whose grandeur and glory is visible, and who appears to be injurious or beneficent to him, hold in themselves the real power and authority, and therefore they are divine. Thus he worships trees, animals, rivers, mountains, fire, rain, air, heavenly bodies, and numerous other things.

In a higher stage, having got some light of true knowledge, he comes to know that these great and powerful objects are quite helpless and dependent like himself; the largest and the strongest animal dies like a tiny gnat, and loses all power; large rivers rise and fall and become dry; the mountains are blasted and shattered by man himself; the productiveness of the earth is not under the latter's own control; water makes it prosperous, lack of water dries it up and makes it barren. Even water is not independent, it depends on air which brings the clouds; air itself is powerless, and its usefulness depends on other causes. The moon, the sun and the stars are also bound up by some powerful law against which they cannot make the slightest movement. After these considerations his mind turns to the possibility of some great mysterious powers of divine

Articles of Faith

nature which controlled the objects he sees and in which all authority seemes to centre. These reflections give rise to belief in mysterious powers behind the natural phenomena, numberless gods are supposed to be governing various parts and aspects of nature, such as air, light, water, etc., and some suggestive material forms or symbols are made to represent them and to be worshiped.

Further, having received more light, man finds out traces of an all-powerful law and an all-encompassing control in the universe. What a complete regularity is observed in the sunrise and the sunset, in the winds and the rains, in the motions of stars and the changes of seasons. How in a wonderfully harmonious way countless different forces are working jointly, and what a highly potent and supremely Wise Law it is, according to which all the various causes in the universe are made to work together at an appointed time to produce an appointed event. Observing this uniformity, regularity, and complete obedience to a fixed law in all the forces of Nature, even a polytheist man finds himself obliged to believe that there must be a deity greater than all others, exercising supreme authority. For, if there were separate independent deities, the whole machinery of the universe would be upset. He calls this greatest

deity by different names, such as "Allah" "Permешвар," "God", "Khuda-i-Khudaigan", etc. But as the darkness of ignorance still persists, he continues worshipping minor deities along with the supreme Deity. He imagines that the divine Kingdom of God may not be different from earthly kingdoms. Just as an earthly king has many ministers, trusted associates, governors and other responsible officers, so the minor deities are like so many responsible officers under the great God, Who could not be approached without pleasing and propitiating the officers under Him. So, they must also be worshipped, and appealed to for help, and should in no case be offended. Thus they were made agents to approach great God.

With further increase of knowledge, the number of the minor deities begins to decrease. More enlightened man brings each one of them to a searching scrutiny, and finds out ultimately that none of these man-made deities has any divine character; they are only created beings like man, rather more helpless. They are, thus, dropped out one by one until only one God remains. But men's notions about that one God still contain some remnants of the elements of ignorance. Some imagine that he has wife and children; others think that he has a body as

Articles of Faith

men have, and is settled in a particular place. Some believe that God came down to the earth in human form; others think that God after settling the affairs of the universe is now taking rest. Some believe that it is necessary to approach God with the intercession of saints and spirits, for nothing can be had without their intermediation. Some imagine God to have some form or image, which it was necessary to keep before them for worship. Such distorted notions of godhead have persisted and lingered, and many of them are practised among mankind even in the present age.

La ilaha illallah is the highest conception of godhead, the knowledge of which God had sent to mankind in all ages through His Prophets. It was this knowledge with which in the beginning Adam had been sent down to the earth; it was the same knowledge that had been revealed to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (God's blessings be upon them all!). It was this very knowledge which Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!) brought to mankind. It is knowledge absolutely pure without the least colouring of ignorance. Man became guilty of *shirk*, idol-worship and *kufr*, only because he turned away from the teachings of the Prophets, and depended upon his own reasoning and the testimony of his senses.

Towards Understanding Islam

Now we will explain the great reality underlying this short phrase.

(1) The first question is the conception of divinity.

Look at this limitless universe. Man's mind falls short of thinking its beginning and its end. It has continued from an unknown time, and is continuing till some unknown time. Creatures beyond limit and beyond number have appeared in it and go on appearing. The phenomena is so bewildering that a thinking man feels himself simply astonished in appreciating it. Who can be its maker, conductor and controller but one Who Himself must be infinite, must have existed from eternity, and must remain so for eternity, must not be in need of anything, must be independent, omnipotent, all-wise and omniscient; nothing must be hidden from Him; He must have supreme authority over all; none dare disobey Him; He must possess limitless powers, must be life-giver and all-provident for all that the universe contains, must be free from flaw, defect or weakness; and none may have the power to interfere in His work.

(2) It is essential that all these divine attributes and powers should exist in one personality; it is impossible for two different personalities, having these powers and attributes equally, to co-exist, for only one personality can be the most

Articles of Faith

powerful, overlord and master of all. Their distribution among several deities is also impossible, for if one deity be the governor of the universe, and another be the possessor of all knowledge, and another be all-provident, and so on, they will have the defect of being in need of, or dependent upon, each other; and if one of them did not accept alliance with another, the whole universe would disappear at once. It is also impossible that these attributes be transferable, *i.e.*, a certain attribute might be present in a certain deity at one time, and at another time it be found in another deity, for a divine being who has not power to live himself cannot give life to the whole universe, and one who cannot protect his own divine power is unfit to govern such a vast and limitless universe. Therefore the more will your mind be illumined by the light of knowledge, the firmer will your conviction become that all the divine attributes and powers must exist only in one divine personality.

(3) Keep in view this right and perfect conception of God, and have a searching glance at this vast universe. Do you find among all the objects that you see, among all the things you can feel or perceive, among all that your knowledge can compass, any one possessing divine attributes? Certainly not; for everything in the

universe is needy, is governed and controlled, is made and unmade, and lives and dies ; nothing is permanently in one state, nothing has power in itself to act, nothing can make the slightest movement against the Law which controls it. Their helpless condition proves their unfitness for divinity ; nor can the slightest reflection of divinity be observable in them. They have absolutely nothing to do with divinity. This is the meaning of *La ilaha*, i.e., "there is no god".

(4) When you have thus wrested divinity from every element of the universe, that is, when you have convinced yourself that none of them has any trace of divinity, you have to admit that a Being Who over and above all of them is alone the possessor of all the divine attributes, and none but that Being can be God. This is the meaning of *illallah*, i.e., "but Allah."

This knowledge is greater and higher than all kinds of knowledge, and, at the same time, this is the right starting point for investigation in every branch of knowledge. Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Geology, Biology, Zoology, Humanism, in short, whatever science or branch of knowledge there is for the study and investigation of the various realities of the universe, the farther and deeper you advance in your probings, the truth of *La ilaha illallah* will become more and more.

Articles of Faith

evident and convincing to you. At every step of your research in knowledge you will perceive that with the denial of this great and primary truth everything in the universe becomes meaningless.

Now we will explain to you the effect of the declaration of *La ilaha illallah* on man's life, and why one who denies and rejects it becomes a failure in this world as well as in the next.

The effect of the belief in the unity of God on man's life.

1. A believer in this declaration of faith can never have a narrow outlook. He believes in God, the Creator of heavens and earth, the Master of the east and the west, and the Maintainer of the whole world. After this belief he does not see anything in the universe as a stranger to himself. He looks upon everything in the Creation owning the same Master and the same King as he does. His sympathy, love and service do not remain confined to any particular sphere. His outlook becomes boundless like the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, one who believes in a multiplicity of deities, or believes in a deity possessing man's limited and defective qualities, or is an out and out unbeliever in God, cannot achieve that breadth of mind and of view.

2. This declaration produces in man the highest degree of self-respect and self-esteem.

The believer in it knows that the One God alone is the possessor of all power, and that none beside Him can benefit or harm a person, or provide for his needs, or gives and takes away life, or has any authority or influence. The conviction of this truth makes him indifferent to, and independent and fearless of, all power other than God's. He never bends his head in homage to any of God's creatures, nor does he stretch his hand before anyone. He does not admit, nor is awed by, the greatness of anything. This quality or attitude of mind is not produced by any other belief than belief in the Unity of God. For those who associate other beings with God, or who deny God, it is necessary that they should bow in homage to other creatures, consider them able to benefit or harm them, fear them and rest all their hopes in them.

3. Along with self-respect this declaration also determines humility. One who believes in it can never be proud or haughty. The pride of power, wealth and worth can have no room in his heart, because he knows that whatever he possesses has been given to him by God, and that God can take away just as He can give. In contrast to this, an unbeliever, when he achieves some worldly merit, becomes proud, because he believes that his merit is due to his own worth. In the same way pride

Articles of Faith

is a necessary outcome and concomitant of *kufr* (unbelief) and *shirk* (association of others with God to share His divinity), because a *kafir* and a *mushrik* believe that with the deities they have a particular relation which does not exist between them and other people.

4. The believer in this declaration has the conviction that there is no other means of redemption besides purity of soul and righteousness in life, because he has perfect faith in God Who is above all need, is related to none, is absolutely just, and none has any hand or influence in the exercise of His divine powers. Opposed to this the *kafirs* and the *mushriks* always live on false hopes. Some of them believe that God's son has atoned for their sins; some think that they are God's favourites, and will not be punished; others believe that their saints will intercede with God in their behalf; while others make offerings to their deities, and believe that by so doing they have secured a license for doing in this world whatever they like. Such false beliefs keep them always entangled in the meshes of sins and evil deeds, and depending upon their deities they neglect to purify their souls and to do good deeds. As to atheists, they do not believe that there is any Being having power over them, to whom they would be responsible for their good or bad actions; therefore they

consider themselves altogether independent to act in this world. The desires of their own minds are their gods, and they are their slaves.

5. The believer in this declaration does not become despondent and broken-hearted under any circumstances. He has firm faith in God, Who is the Master of all the treasures of the earth and of the heavens, Whose grace and bounty have no limit and Whose powers are infinite. This faith imparts to his heart extraordinary consolation, fills it with satisfaction and keeps it brimful of hopes. In this world he might meet with rejection from all doors, nothing therein might serve his ends, all means might, one after another, desert him, but faith in, and dependence on, God do not leave him, and upon their strength he goes on struggling. Such a profound satisfaction can result from no other belief than belief in one God. *Mushriks*, *kafirs* and atheists have tiny hearts ; they depend upon limited powers ; therefore in troubles they are soon oppressed with despair, and not often they commit suicide.

6. Belief in this declaration produces in man a very strong degree of determination, patient perseverance and trust in God. When he girds up his loins to accomplish great works in order to secure God's pleasure, he is sure that he has the support of the power of the Lord of the earth

Articles of Faith

and of the heavens. This certainly makes him firm and strong like a mountain, and no difficulties, troubles and hostile forces of the world can make him give up his resolution. *Shirk, kufr* and atheism have no such effect.

7. This declaration inspires bravery into man. There are really two things which make a man coward. *First*, fear of death and love of safety ; *second*, the idea that there is someone else beside God, who can take away life, and that by adopting certain measures one can ward off death, belief in *La ilaha illallah* purges the mind of both these ideas. The first idea goes out of his mind because he knows that his life and his property and every thing else really belong to God, and he becomes ready to sacrifice his all for His pleasure. He gets rid of the second idea because he knows that no man or animal or gun or sword or stick or stone has the power of taking away life ; God alone has the power to do so. Before the time ordained by Him all the forces of the world cannot take away anyone's life. It is for this reason that no one is braver than the one who has faith in God. Nothing can daunt him, nor even an array of drawn out swords, the volleys of bullets, the hail of balls and the advance of storming armies. When he advances to fight for God he turns back the face even of a force ten

times stronger than himself. Whence can the *mushriks*, the *kafirs* and the atheists bring forth such force and power? They hold life the dearest of all in the world, and they believe that death is brought about by the enemy, and can be warded off by his running away.

8. The belief in *La ilaha illallah* gives an attitude of care-free contentment, purges the mind of the subtle passions of jealousy, envy and greed, and keeps away the ideas of resorting the base and unfair means for achieving success. He understands that bread is in God's hands, and He doles out more or less as He likes, that honour, power, reputation and authority are subject to His will, and He bestows them as He wills, and that our part is to endeavour and struggle fairly. He knows that success and failure depend upon God's grace ; if He wills to give, no power in the world can prevent Him from doing so ; and if He does not will to give, no power can make Him will to give. On the other hand, the *mushriks*, the *kafirs* and the atheists consider success and failure as dependent upon their own struggle and upon the help or opposition of earthly powers, and, therefore, they always remain slaves to cupidity and envy. For achieving success they never hesitate in having recourse to bribery, flattery, conspiracy and every kind of base and unfair means. The

Articles of Faith

jealousy and envy of others' success eats them away, and they leave no stone unturned in resorting to the worst measures in bringing about the downfall of their successful rival.

9. The most important effect of *La ilaha illallah* is that it makes man obey and observe God's Law. One who has belief in it is sure that God knows everything hidden or open, and is nearer to us than our own jugular vein. If we commit a sin in a secluded corner and in the darkness of night, He knows it ; He even knows our wrong intentions. We can hide from everyone, but we cannot hide anything from God ; we can escape everyone, but it is impossible to escape God's grip. The firmer is a man's assurance in this respect, the more observant will he be of God's commands ; he will shun what God has forbidden, and he will carry out His orders even in solitude and in darkness, because he knows that God's police never leaves him alone, and he dreads the Court whose warrant he can never escape. It is for this reason that the first and the most important condition for being a Muslim is to have faith in *La ilaha illallah*. 'Muslim,' as you have already been told, means one 'obedient to God', and obedience to God is impossible unless one were to believe definitely that there was no *ilah*—none worthy to be worshipped—but God.

Towards Understanding Islam

In the teachings of Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!) faith in God is the most important and fundamental principle. It is the centre and the root of Islam, and the mainspring of its power. All other beliefs, commands and laws of Islam stand firm on this very foundation; all receive strength from this source. Take it away, and there is nothing left in Islam.

Belief in God's angels. Next to faith in God, the Prophet has instructed us to have faith in the existence of angels. The great and advantageous outcome of this article is that the belief in the unity of God becomes absolutely pure and free from the danger of any shadow of *shirk* (polytheism) mixing with it.

We have already told you that the *mushriks* have associated with God two kinds of creatures: (1) Those which have material existence and are perceptible, such as sun, moon, stars, fire, water, animals, great men, etc. (2) Those which have no material body and are not perceptible; and, unseen, they are believed to be engaged in the administration of the universe, for instance, one controls air, another gives light, another brings rain and so on.

The first kind, *viz.*, the material creatures, are before man's eyes, and the words *La ilaha illallah* themselves are enough to show that such objects

Articles of Faith

have no share in the divinity of God. The second kind of things are hidden from view and are mysterious ; the *mushriks* are more inclined to pin their faith in them. They consider them to be deities, gods, god's children, make their images, and render offerings to them. In order to purify the belief in the unity of God, and to clear it from the admixture of this second kind of unseen creatures, this particular article of faith has been added to the first.

Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) has informed us that these imperceptible spiritual beings, whom people believe to be deities and gods and god's children, are really God's angels. They have no share in God's divinity ; they are under God's orders, and are so obedient that they cannot deviate from His commands even to the extent of a hair. God employs them to administer His Kingdom, and they carry out His orders exactly and accurately. They have no authority to do anything of their own accord ; they cannot present to God any scheme conceived by themselves ; they are not authorised even to intercede with God for any man. To worship them, and to solicit their help is degrading and debasing for man. For in the beginning of man's creation God had made them prostrate before Adam, granted to him greater knowledge than they possessed.

Towards Understanding Islam

and passing over them He bestowed upon Adam His own vicegerency upon the Earth. What debasement can, therefore, be greater for man than prostrating before, and soliciting favour of, those who had prostrated before him !

Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) forbade us to worship angels, and to associate them with God in His divinity, but along with it he informed us that they were chosen creatures of God, free from sin, from their very nature unable to disobey God, and ever engaged in carrying out His orders. Moreover, he informed us that these angels of God were surrounding you from all sides, are attached to you, and are always in your company. They observe and note all your actions, good or bad. They preserve complete record of every man's life. After death when you will be brought before God, they will present a full report of your life-work on earth, wherein you will find everything correctly recorded, not a single movement left out, however insignificant and however carefully concealed it may be.

We have not been informed of the intrinsic nature of the angels. Only some of their virtues or attributes have been mentioned to us, and we have been ordered to believe in their existence. We have no means of knowing their nature, what they are and what they are not. It would be,

Articles of Faith

therefore, sheer ignorance on our part to attribute any form to them, and say they are so and so. To deny their existence is *kufr*, for we have no reason for such a denial, and our denial of them would be tantamount to attributing untruth to Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!). We believe in their existence only because God's true Messenger has informed us of it.

The third article of Faith which Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!)

Belief in the Books of God.

has commanded us to believe, is belief in the Books of God, which

He has sent down to His Prophets from time to time.

God had sent down His Books to His Prophets before Muhammad just as He sent down the Quran to him. We have been informed of the names of some of these Books, as the Books of Abraham, the Torah of Moses, Zaboor of David and the Injeel of Jesus Christ. We have not been informed of the names of Books which had been given to other Prophets. With regard to other existing religious books, we are not, therefore, in a position to say definitely that they are or are not books revealed by God. But we tacitly believe that whatever books had been sent down by God were true.

Of the Books we have been told, the Book of

Towards Understanding Islam

Abraham does not now exist in the world. David's Zaboor (psalms), the Torah and the Injeel exist with the Jews and the Christians. But in the Quran we have been informed that people have changed and interpolated these books, and have mixed with their context many things from themselves. The Jews and the Christians themselves admit that they do not possess their original books, and have only their translations, wherein for many centuries many alterations have been made, and are still being made. On studying these books we find many passages and accounts which evidently cannot be from God. God's words and man's words are mixed together in these books, and we have no means of knowing what portion of it is from God and what portion is from man. We have been commanded to believe in previous divine books only to admit that before the Quran also God had sent down Books through His Prophets, that they were all from one and the same God Who sent the Quran, and that the sending of the Quran as a divine Book is not a new and strange event, but that it is only to confirm and recall those divine instructions which people had forgotten in past ages.

The Quran is the last of the divine books sent down by God, and these are some of the important differences between it and the previous divine

Articles of Faith

books:—

1. The original copies of most of the previous divine books were lost altogether, and only their translations exist to-day. The Quran, on the other hand, exists exactly as it had been sent down to the Prophet; not a word—nay, not a dot of it has been changed.

2. In the previous divine books man mixed his words with God's words, but in the Quran not even a minute alteration has been effected, as admitted even by the opponents of Islam.

3. Regarding all the sacred books of the different people, of not one of them can be said on historical evidence that it really belongs to the same Prophet to whom it is attributed. In case of some of them even it is not known in what age and to which Prophet they had been sent down. As to the Quran, there are so many strong evidences of its having been sent down to Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) that no one can doubt it. Even of the verses of the Quran it is known distinctly where and when they were revealed.

4. The previous divine books had been sent down in languages which had become dead since a long time. There are no people in the world, who speak those languages in this age of ours; a very few can only understand them. Therefore,

even if these books existed to-day in their original and accurate form, it would not be possible for the people of this age to understand them and follow them practically. The language of the Quran, however, is a living language ; millions of people speak it, and millions of them know and understand it. It is a part of the courses of instruction nearly in every university of the world ; every man can learn it, and he who has no time to learn it can find everywhere men who can explain to him the meaning of the Quran.

5. Each of the existing sacred books found among different nations of the world has been addressed to a particular people. Each of them contains commands which were meant to be carried out at a particular time, and which met the needs of that time only. They are not, however, required now, nor can they be carried out. It is evident from this that these books were meant for different people particularly ; none of them was meant for the whole world. Still more, they had not been sent to be followed permanently by the people to whom they had been sent, but they were meant to be acted upon only for a certain time. In contrast to this, the Quran has been addressed to all mankind ; not a single clause of it can be suspected as having been addressed to a particular people. In the same manner all

Articles of Faith

the commands and ordinances in the Quran are such as can be acted upon at every place and at every time. This fact proves that the Quran is meant for the world, and is an eternal code for human life.

6. It is true, each of the previous divine books mentioned what was good and righteous, taught the principles of morality and truthfulness, and explained the mode of living according to God's pleasure, but none of them embraced all that is necessary for good human life, and omitted nothing. On the other hand the Quran embraces all that was good in those books, and, at the same time, all that is necessary and had not been mentioned in them.

7. On account of man's interference and interpolation, many things have been inserted in those books, which are against reality and against reason, which are based on cruelty and injustice, and which vitiate man's beliefs and actions. Indecency and immorality are found in many of them. The Quran is free from all such rubbish. It contains nothing against reason, and nothing that can be proved wrong. None of its ordinances is unjust; nothing in it is misleading. Of indecency and immorality not a trace can be found in it. From the beginning to the end, the whole Quran is full of wisdom and true philo-

Towards Understanding Islam

sophy, lessons of fairness and justice, guidance to the straight path, and the best rules and laws of life.

It is on account of these special features of the Quran that all the people of the world have been directed to have faith in it, to give up all other books and to follow the Quran alone, because it contains all the directions necessary for living in accordance with God's pleasure, and after it there is absolutely no need for any other divine book.

When the difference between the Quran and other divine books is known to you, you can understand what should be the difference between having faith in the Quran and in the other books. Faith in the previous divine books should be limited to the confirmation that they were all from God, were true, and had been sent down to fulfil the same purpose for which the Quran has been sent. Contrarily, the belief in the Quran should be of the nature that it is purely and absolutely God's own word, that it is perfectly true, that every word of it is preserved, that everything mentioned therein is right, that it is the bounden duty of man to carry out in life every command of it, and that whatever be against it must be rejected.

You have been informed in the last chapter **Faith in God's Messenger.** that God's Messengers had been raised among every people,

Articles of Faith

and that they all taught the same Islam for instructing which Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!) was sent. In this respect all the Messengers or Prophets of God form one group of the same category. If a man belies any one of them, he, as it were, belies all; if a man confirms and believes in one of them, he must *a priori* confirm all. Suppose ten men make one and the same statement; if you admit one of them to be true, you have *a priori* admitted the remaining nine of them also to be true; if you belie any one of them, by implication you belie all of them. It is for this reason that in Islam it is necessary to have implicit belief in all the Prophets of God. One who does not believe in one of the Prophets would be a *kafir*, though he might be believing in all the remaining Prophets.

It is said traditionally that the number of all the Prophets to different people at different times is 124,000. If you consider the age of the world since it was inhabited, and that how many different peoples and nations have passed in it, this number will not appear too great to you. We have to believe positively those of this number whose names have been mentioned in the Quran. Regarding the rest we are instructed to believe that all men sent by God for the guidance of mankind were true. We believe in all the Pro-

phets raised in India, China, Persia, Egypt, Africa, Europe and other countries of the world, but we are not in a position to say definitely about a certain person that he was or was not a Prophet, for we have been told nothing definite about him. Nor are we allowed to say anything against the holy men of those people who follow other religions. It is quite possible that they might have been God's Prophets, and their followers would have corrupted their teachings after them, just as the followers of Moses and Jesus (God's blessings be upon them !) have corrupted their religions. Therefore whenever we express any opinion about them, it would be about the tenets and rituals of the religion, but we will remain scrupulously silent about the founders of religions, lest we might become guilty of irreverence towards a Prophet.

Our connection with the Prophets of the past is only this much that we believe in their Prophethood. With Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) we have also a living connection of faith in, and obedience to him. There are three reasons for this difference :—

(1) The Prophets of the past had come to certain people for certain periods of time, while Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) was sent for the whole world and for all future time, as we have mentioned in detail in the last chapter.

Articles of Faith

(2) The teachings of those Prophets have either disappeared altogether from the world, or whatever of them remains is not pure, and is found intermingled with many errors. For this reason even if anyone wishes to follow those teachings he cannot do so. In contrast to this, the teachings of Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !), his biography, his oral instructions, his own methods of life, his morals, habits and virtues, in short all the details about him, are preserved in the world. Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !), therefore, is the only one of the Prophets, who is a living personality, and whose following alone is possible.

(3) The instruction imparted through the Prophets of the past was not complete. Every prophet had been followed by another who effected alterations and additions, in the commands, ordinances and directions set forth by his predecessor, and, in this way, the chain of reform and progress continued. It is for this reason that the teachings of those Prophets after the lapse of the period fixed for them were not preserved. Naturally there was no need of preserving former teachings in spite of amendments. At last fully complete instructions were imparted through Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !), and all previous sacred books were automatically cancelled, for it

is clearly unreasonable to follow an incomplete code while the complete code exists. He who follows Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) follows, as it were, all the Prophets, for whatever was good in their teachings has been embodied in his teachings. Whoever sets aside Muhammad's teachings, and chooses to follow some other Prophet, will be deprived of many useful directions embodied in Muhammad's teachings, which did not exist in that Prophet's book.

For these reasons it is incumbent on all men in the world to follow Muhammad alone. To become a true Muslim it is necessary to have faith in Muhammad from three stand-points :—

1. He is a true Prophet of God.
2. His teachings are absolutely complete, free from any defect or error.
3. He is the last Prophet of God. After him no prophet will appear among any people till the Day of Judgment, nor is any such personage to appear, to believe whom would be an essential condition for a Muslim, or to deny whom would make a man *kafir*.

The fifth article which Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) has directed as binding on us is to believe in the next world. The essential constituents of this article of faith are as

Belief in the Day of Judgment.

Articles of Faith

follows :—

(1) One day God will annihilate this world along with all the creatures in it. That day is called the Last Day.

(2) Then He will restore life to all the creatures that had been living in this world, and they will be taken to His presence. This event is called Resurrection.

(3) The records of the deeds of all men and women will be presented for the final judgment.

(4) God will weight the good and bad deeds of every person. The one whose good deeds weigh heavier in the Divine Balance than his evil deeds will be forgiven ; and the one whose evil deeds be heavier will be punished rather heavily.

(5) The forgiven will go to Paradise, and the condemned will go to Hell.

The belief in the Day of Judgment, as enjoined

Necessity of belief in the Day of Judgment. by Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) had been similarly enjoined by the Prophets before him, and in every age

it had been an essential condition of being 'Muslim. All the Prophets have declared that there is no Islam with the denial of that Day, all the remaining articles become meaningless. Moreover, the whole conduct of man in this life, his very outlook on life, is affected. A little thought

will convince you on this point. When you are told to do something, the first question that arises in your mind will be, "What is the use of it, and what harm will be involved in not doing it?" Why does this question arise in your mind? Because man instinctively thinks a useless action to be unnecessary. You will never be ready for an action which you are sure will be of no use. In the same way you will not evade an action which you are sure is harmless. The same is the case with doubt; you will not set your heart in a work of doubtful use, nor you will make a particular effort to evade a work of doubtful harm. Why does a child put his hand in fire? Because he is not sure that fire has the property of burning. Why does a child evade studying? Because he does not quite grasp the benefits of education, which his elders try to impress on his mind. Now think, a man who does not believe in the Day of Judgment would consider belief in God and in living according to His pleasure to be of no consequence. To him neither obedience to God is of any use, nor disobedience to Him of any harm. How, then, would it be possible for him to obey the laws sent by God through His Messengers and through His Books? Suppose he believes in God as God, what will be the use of this belief when he will not obey His law and will not conduct his

life according to His pleasure.

The matter does not end here. Thinking more deeply, you will find that the acceptance or rejection of the Day of Judgment is determining factor in man's life. As mentioned before, man's attitude about an action, the doing or not doing of it, is instinctively determined by the resultant benefit or harm of the act. There is a man who has in view the benefit or harm only of this world. He will not be ready to undertake any good act whereby he might have no hope of gaining some worldly interest, and will not evade any wrong act which he is not afraid of as being injurious to his like interest. There is another man who thinks of the final consequences of acts. He looks upon all harms and benefits resulting in this world as only of temporary nature, and keeping in view the everlasting benefit or harm of an act, he would do a good act and avoid a wrong one, however greatly might his good act injure, or the wrong act might benefit, his interest in this world.

Now observe the great difference between the two men. One's conception of good act is its beneficial result in the short temporary life of this world, as money, land, office, title, reputation, public applause, some pleasure or happiness, the fulfilment of some wish, or self-gratification ; and

his conception of a wrong act is that it may involve a risk of some injurious consequence, in this world, such as loss of life and property, spoiling of health, ill-reputation, punishment by the government, some trouble or annoyance or unpleasantsness. In contrast to this the other's conception of good is what pleases God, and of evil what offends Him. According to him a good act, even if it did not bring any benefit to him in this world, or rather injured him, would still be good, and he is sure that God will ultimately bestow upon him everlasting benefit. Similarly he looks upon a wrong act as wrong though it involve no harm to him in this world, nor fear of any harm, and be rather certain of benefit. He is sure that if he escaped punishment in this short life, or enjoyed benefit for a few days here, in the end he would not escape punishment by God.

These are two different ideas which make man adopt two different courses in life. For one who does not believe in the Day of Judgment it is absolutely impossible to conduct his life as suggested by Islam. Islam says, "In the way of God give *zakat* (charity) to the poor." His answer is "Zakat will lessen my wealth; on the other hand, I will take interest on my money, and when I obtain a decree of the Court, I will have attached everything belonging to the debtors, though they be

poor." Islam says, "Always speak truth, and shun lying, though you may gain ever so much by lying, and lose ever so much by speaking truth." He answers, "What shall I do with a truth which is of no use to me here, and, on the other hand, brings loss to me; and why should I avoid lying which may bring benefit to me without any risk, even of a bad name?" He passes a long lonely road, and spies a precious object lying in it; Islam says, "This is not your property, do not take it;" he says, "This is a thing I have come by without any cost or trouble, why should I not have it? There is no one to witness here, who might report to the police, or give evidence against me in a Court of Law, or give me a bad name among the people. Why should I not make use of this property?" Someone secretly keeps a deposit with this man, and after that he dies. Islam says, "Be honest with the property deposited with you, and give it over to the family of the deceased." He says, "Why? There is no evidence of his property being with me; his children also have no knowledge about it. When I can appropriate it without any difficulty, without any fear of legal claim, or stain on my reputation, why should I not do so?" In short at every step in life Islam will direct him to walk in a certain method or attitude, and he will adopt the opposite

method or attitude. For Islam measures and values everything from the viewpoint of its everlasting consequences connected with the next world; while such a person in every act has in view only the outcome of it in the short life of this world. Now you can understand why a man cannot be a Muslim without belief in the Day of Judgment. To be Muslim is a very great achievement. The truth is that the denial of the Day of Judgment degrades man from humanity to a place even lower than the lowest of animals.

So far the necessity and the usefulness of the belief in the Day of Judgment.

The truth of the belief in the Day of Judgment. Now we explain to you briefly that the correctness of what Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) has told us about the Day of Judgment is borne out by reason. Though the basis of our belief in that day is our implicit trust in the Messenger of God, and not reason still when we reflect in the matter this belief appears to us more reasonable than other beliefs in such ending of the world.

Regarding the next world there are three beliefs current in the world.

1. One group of men says that there is nothing left of man after death, and after that life-ending event, there is no other life. This is the

Articles of Faith

idea of the atheists who claim to know science.

2. The second group maintains that man, in order to bear the consequences of his acts, is repeatedly regenerated in this very world. If his acts are bad, in the next generation he will be transmigrated into some animal like dog or cat, etc., or some tree, or some worse kind of man. If his acts have been good, he will be reborn a man of a higher degree. This idea is found in some religions.

The third group believes in the Day of Judgment, the resurrection, man's presence in the divine Court of God, and the award of reward and punishment. This is the common belief of all the Prophets.

Now, reflect on the belief of the first group. They declare that they have not seen anyone come to life after death ; they see that whoever diesmingles with the earth ; they conclude, therefore, that there is no life after death. This argument of theirs is not right. When they have not seen anyone come to life after death, the utmost they can say is, 'we do not know what will happen after death'. But they go further, and claim positively that, 'we know nothing will happen after death'. While they have no proof for what they claim. If a villager has not seen an aeroplane, he can say, 'I do not know what an

aeroplane is,' ; but if he says, 'I know there is no aeroplane,' the wise will call him a fool, because his not having seen a thing does not mean that the thing does not exist. No man, nor even the whole world, who has or have not seen a certain thing, can claim that it does not or cannot exist.

Now examine the belief of the second group. According to them a man who is at present a human being has become so because in his last generation he was an animal, and had done good deeds ; and an animal which is at present an animal is in the animal group because in his last generation he was a man, and his deeds had been bad. In other words, to be a man or an animal, or a tree, is the consequence of one's deeds in the former generation. Now the question arises, " which of them was first man ? animal ? or tree ? " If they say man was first, they will have to accept that he must have been an animal or tree before that, otherwise it will be asked, ' for what bad deeds he was punished with re-birth into the form of an animal or tree ? ' they will have to presume that it must have been a man before that, otherwise the question will be ' what sin it committed to be punished in being animal or tree ? ' In short the advocates or followers of this belief cannot settle any form for the first creature, for every

Articles of Faith

generation implies a preceding generation so that the succeeding generation may be considered as the consequence of the former. This is simply absurd.

Now consider the third belief, of which the first proposition is—"One day the world will end; God will destroy and annihilate the existing physical system, and in its place will evolve another higher and far better cosmos." This is a statement in the truth of which there can be no doubt. The more we reflect on the nature of the existing cosmos, the more clearly it is proved that the existing system is not a permanent and everlasting creation, for all the forces working in it are limited in their nature, and it becomes a certainty that one day they will be completely exhausted. For this reason all scientists agree that one day the sun will become cold and without energy, the stars will one day collide with each other, and the whole system of the universe will be upset and destroyed. Moreover, if evolution is true in the case of the constituents of this universe, why it may not be true for the whole of it? To think of the universe becoming totally not existant is more improbable, than that it will pass into another evolutionary stage and another order of things will emerge, much more improved, rather an ideal one.

The second proposition of this belief is that man will again be given life. Is it possible? If so, how did the present life of man become possible? It is evident that God Who created man in this world can do so also in the next. Not only it is a possibility, it is a positive necessity as will be shown later.

The third proposition is that the record of all the actions of man in this world is preserved, and will be presented on the Day of Resurrection. The proof of the integrity of this proposition is provided here in these days by science itself. It was first understood that the sound which comes out of our mouth produces slight waves in the air, and dies out. Now, however, it is discovered that the sound leaves its impression on all things about it, and can be reproduced. Gramophone records are made on the same principle. From this it is shown that the record of every movement of man is being impressed on all things with which the waves produced by the movement collide. From this fact it is quite certain that the record of all our deeds is completely preserved, and can be reproduced.

The fourth proposition is that "on the Day of Resurrection God will hold His Court, and with just judgment reward or punish man for his good and bad deeds." What is unreasonable about it?

Articles of Faith

Reason itself demands that God were to hold His Court and pronounce just judgments. We see here that a man does a good deed, and thereby gains nothing in this world. We see another man who does a bad deed, and does not suffer for it here. Not only this, we see thousands of cases of a good act bringing trouble on the doer, and of a bad deed resulting in the happiness and gratification of the guilty person. When we notice these events happening every day, our reason and sense of justice demand that some time the man who does good must be rewarded, and the one who does evil must be punished. The present order of things, as you can see yourself, is subject to physical laws, according to which it is quite natural that a man who has got the means to do evil, can do so if he chooses to, and it is not necessary that its evil consequences should react upon him wholly or partly. If you have got a tin of petrol and a match-box you can set fire to the house of your opponent, and you can escape every consequence of this deed if the physical laws are in your favour. Does it mean that such an offence has got no consequence at all? Certainly not. It means only that its physical result has appeared, and the moral result, or more truly, the rational result is reserved. Do you really think it reasonable that it should never appear? If you

say it should, the question will arise, where it may appear? Certainly not in this world, because in this physical world only the physical consequences of actions appear fully, while rational consequences do not. Reactions of this higher category demand another order of things wherein rational laws should be the governing laws and the physical laws be subject to them. That is the next world which, as we have said before, is the next evolutionary stage of the universe. It is evolutionary in this sense that it will be governed by rational laws rather than physical laws. The rational consequences of man's actions, which are reserved wholly or partly in this world, will appear therein. Man's status will be determined by his rational worth as judged exactly according to his conduct in the long trial at the prior stage. There you will not find a worthy man serving under a fool, or a morally superior man in a position inferior to a wretch, as is the case in this world.

The last proposition of this belief is the existence of Paradise and Hell, which is also not impossible. If God can make the sun, the moon, the Mars, and the earth, why should He not be able to make Paradise and Hell? When He holds His Court, and pronounces just judgments, rewarding the meritorious and punishing the guilty, there

Articles of Faith

must be a place where the meritorious might enjoy their reward—honour, happiness and gratification of all kinds,—and another place where the condemned might feel debasement, pain and misery.

After considering all these questions well, your reason will choose the belief in the next world as the most acceptable to common-sense, and having in it nothing unreasonable or impossible. Moreover when a true Prophet like Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) has stated this to be a fact, and it involves nothing but good for us, wise it is to believe it implicitly, not to reject it without any sound reason.

The above are the five articles of Faith which form the foundation for the superstructures of Islam. Their gist is contained in the short sentence. When you declare *La ilaha illallah* (there is no deity worth worship but *Allah*), you give up all false deities, and profess that you are a creature of the One God ; and when you add to these words *Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah* (Muhammad is Allah's Messenger) you confirm and admit the Prophethood of Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !). With the admission of his Prophethood it becomes obligatory that you should believe in the divine nature and the attri-

Kalimah-i-Tayyibah.

Towards Understanding Islam

butes of God, in the angels, in the heavenly Books, and in the next world, and follow whatever method of obeying God and worshipping Him he has taught.

RELIGIOUS DEVOTIONS

The spirit of devotions—Namaz (prayers)—Fast—Zakat (Poor rate)—Pilgrimage—Defence of Islam.

In the last chapter you have been told that Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) has enjoined us to believe in five articles of Faith :—

1. Belief in the One God, who has no associate with Him in His divinity.
2. Belief in God's angels.
3. Belief in God's Books, Particularly in the Holy Quran.
4. Belief in God's Prophets, particularly His last Messenger, Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !).
5. Belief in the next world.

These five articles make up the foundation of Islam. One who believes in them becomes a member of the Muslim community ; but he does not yet become a complete Muslim. One is a complete Muslim only when he fully carries out in practice the instructions given by Muhammad

(God's blessings be upon him !) as ordained by God. Belief in them makes practical obedience incumbent. Note that in believing you have professed that Allah, the One God, is your only God, which means that He is your Master, and you are His creature, that He is your Ruler, and you have to obey him. After having recognised Him as your Master and Governor, if you disobey Him, you are a rebel on account of your own profession. Along with faith in God, you believe that the Quran is God's Book, that is, you have admitted all the contents of the Quran to be from God. It becomes now your bounden duty to accept and obey whatever is contained in it. Along with that you have admitted Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) to be God's Messenger, which means that you have admitted that whatever he orders to do, and whatever he forbids, is really from God. After this admission obedience to him becomes your duty. Therefore you will be a complete Muslim only when your acts be consistent with your faith, otherwise your Islam will remain incomplete.

Now let us see the way of conducting life according to God's will which Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) has instructed us; what he has ordered to be done, and what he has forbidden. In this category the first importance as is attached

to *faraiz* (primary duties).

Ibadat is an Arabic word meaning obedience and submission, i.e., Allah is your Master and you are His creature, and whatever the creature does to demonstrate his relation to his

The spirit of devotion or worship. Master in the form of adoration, devotion, worship, etc., would be called *Ibadat*. For instance, you talk to people, and if, during your talk, you refrain from untruth, backbiting, and indecency on account of their having been forbidden by God, and you always observe truthfulness and purity in whatever you say because God is pleased with them, all your conversation will be *Ibadat*, though you talk only of mundane affairs. You have to deal with people, transact some buying or selling in the market, associate with your parents, brothers and sisters in your home, or with your friends and relatives—if in all such dealings in every sphere of life you strictly observe God's commandments and His ordinances, and fulfil what was due to every one of them because God has so ordered, and refrain from unfairness and unlawful disregard of others' rights simply because God has forbidden such acts, the whole of your life passes, as it were, in devotion to God. You helped the poor, gave food to the hungry and served the sick, without the motive of any personal interest, honour or

reputation in view, but only to secure God's pleasure, all these your acts will be reckoned as devotion to God. You are employed to serve someone, and throughout your service, on account of your fear of God, you observe honesty and loyalty, taking what is yours by right, and avoiding what is not rightfully yours, all your service will be recorded in this case as your devotion to God, though the direct object of your service may have been be the earning of your livlihood. Therefore, always fear God in all matters, and keep in view His pleasure, observe His ordinance, reject all gain accruing from disobedience to Him, suffer willingly any loss or risk involved in observing His law and order. This is all *Ibadat* (devotion to God). This kind of life is all adoration of God, and nothing but adoration, so much so that every movement of man, even his sexual intercourse with his lawful wife, and his taking food and drinking water and his sleeping and walking become *Ibadat* in a life so regulated.

The above is the broad spirit of religious devotion or worship, and the real object of Islam is to make man a thoroughly devoted servant of God in this spirit. To prepare every man individually and the society collectively, for this purpose, God has ordained a course of compulsory training called "obligatory devotions," (*faraiz*), which are

social and individual at the same time. They are also called *arkan* (pillars) of the Faith, that is, the Islamic superstructure rests on them as a construction rests on pillars. If they are demolished, the superstructure of Islam falls to the ground.

The first of these duties is *Namaz* (ordained Namaz. prayers). What is *namaz*? To

repeat orally and by action the articles of the creed which embody your faith. You wake up in the morning; the first thing you do is to clean yourself and be present before your Lord, and there, standing bound hand, bending on knees, and prostrating with your head on earth, and sitting in a most humble manner, you profess your being a servant of God, solicit His help and guidance, renew the declaration of obedience to Him, and reiterate the wish for His pleasure and protection from His wrath. You repeat a lesson from His Book, and confirm the truth of His Messenger. You also recall the day when you will be present in His Court to account for your acts. Thus your day begins. You have engaged yourself in your occupation for a few hours. The *Muazzan* (caller to prayer) calls you again in the afternoon, for a few minutes to repeat the lesson, lest you may thoughtlessly neglect God. In response to his call you get up and refresh your faith. You return to your occupation. After a

few hours you are recalled ; you respond, and again refresh your faith. Then ends the day, and the night begins. You begin the night with similar devotions to those with which you had begun the day, so that you may not neglect the same lesson during the night, and commit some error. After a few hours your sleeping time approaches ; and in the quiet of your last waking moments you again repeat the whole of your lesson of the Faith, for, if the day's noise and bustle have disturbed your mind, you may concentrate it in devotion without any disturbance.

Note that *Namaz* strengthens the foundation of your Islam five times in a day. It repeatedly prepares you for the expression of the spirit of devotion, which we have already explained to you in a few lines. It keeps refreshed all those beliefs upon which your personal purity, the improvement of your soul, the integrity of your morality and the rectitude of your acts depend. Why do you strictly follow the method of ablution taught by the messenger of God ? Why do you perform your *namaz* exactly in the way he has instructed ? Only because you consider obedience to him as your duty. Why do you recite the Quran without making any intentional mistake ? Only because you are sure of its being God's Word. If you omit those parts of the *namaz*

which are silently repeated (in mind), or repeat something else in their stead, whom do you fear? No man hears what you repeat. Evidently you stick to the exact readings because you know for certain that God hears what you say, and is not unaware of all your movements, however hidden or unseen they be. Where there is no other person to see you what urges you at all to offer the *namaz*? It is this your belief that God sees you. When the time for *namaz* approaches, what makes you leave your urgent occupation and hurry to the *namaz*? It is this very feeling that God has ordained *namaz* as an obligatory duty for you. At winter mornings and summer noons and in the midst of interesting conversations of daily evenings, what compels you to offer the *namaz*? What can be the cause of it but a deep sense of duty? Moreover, why do you dislike the non-performance of *namaz*, and why do you avoid intentional mistakes in the *namaz*? Simply because you fear God, and you are fully conscious that one day you will have to be present in His Court of Judgment. After all these considerations, think what is better than *namaz* to make you a complete and true Muslim? What training can be better for a Muslim than the institution whereby he repeats every day the exercise of remembering God, thinks of fearing Him, of the certainty of

His omnipresence and omniscience, and of the belief that he has to be present one day in His Court of Judgment, and every day follows necessarily the ways taught by Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!), and that on the whole each day from morning till night he is made to exercise the performance of duty. When such a man after his *namaz* returns to his mundane occupation, can we expect anything from him but that in all his acts he will fear God, observe His law and order, and at every moment of error avoid it on account of his consciousness that God sees him ? After such an excellent training, if a person does not fear God and disobeys His commands, it would not be the fault of the *namaz*, but it would indicate the inherent defect of his own nature.

Moreover, it is worth noting that God has enjoined us to join the congregation for offering the *namaz*, and especially once in the week He has made it obligatory for us to join the congregation for the Friday service, which produces unity and brotherhood among the Muslim community, and through their internal cohesion tends to form a strong nation of them. When in a congregation they all worship one and the same God, stand, sit, bow and prostrate together at one and the same time, their hearts naturally tend towards

each other, and they feel that they are brothers. Besides, the congregational service under the leadership of an Imam (who leads the service) disciplines them to obey a chief and observe order. It also engenders sympathy for one another, equality and sameness of interest. The wealthy and the poor, the high and the low, the highest official and an orderly, all stand in a row as equals without any distinction of high or low, rank or caste.

These are a few advantages which you achieve through the *namaz*. God has made it obligatory for you for your own good. He is displeased when you do not offer *namaz*, not that He loses anything thereby, but that by so doing you have wronged yourself. What immense power God gives you through the observance of the *namaz*, and you shirk it! It is a shame that with your tongue you profess to obey God and His Messenger and your accountability in the next world, and your action is not to perform the most important duty He has imposed upon you. This action of yours can have only two causes;—either you do not believe that the performance of the *namaz* is obligatory, or you admit it to be obligatory but you shirk it. If you deny its obligatory nature, you practically belie both the Quran and the Messenger of God, and still you falsely claim to believe in

Towards Understanding Islam

both. If you admit that it is obligatory, and at the same time you shirk it, you are altogether unreliable, and cannot be trusted in any worldly transaction, for when you can be dishonest in your duty towards God, how can you be expected to be honest in your duty towards men !

The second obligatory duty is fast. It keeps **Fast.** reminding you day and night for full one month in every year the same lessons which the *namaz* makes you repeat five times a day. When *Ramazan*, the month of fast, begins, eating and drinking is forbidden to you from dawn till sunset. Before dawn you are having your food; suddenly you hear the gun announcing the approach of dawn; you at once cease eating and drinking. After this moment till sunset, however, hungry or thirsty you be, whatever delicious food be placed before you, however your heart be tempted to partake of it, you can eat nothing till sunset. Not that you do not eat and drink before any person, but even in solitude where no one sees you it is impossible for you to let a drop of drink or a bit of food pass down your throat. This prohibition is only up to a fixed time. At sunset, the time of *Iftar* (fast-breaking), you hear the gun again, and you are at once free to drink and eat the whole night without any restraint. Now,

think what is it? God's fear and the assurance of God's omniscience and omnipresence underlies the whole institution. It expresses belief in the next world and God's final judgment there. It is strict obedience to God and His Messenger, and a strong demonstration of the feeling of duty. It is an exercise of patience, forbearance and sufferance. It shows power to control and suppress the desires of heart in order to achieve God's pleasure. Every year for full thirty days the fast produces in you all these virtues, so that you might become a full and complete Muslim, and these virtues might equip you for the devotions which you should render and fulfil throughout your life.

Note also that God has fixed one particular month in the year, so that all Muslims may fast together, which involves numerous advantages. In the whole Muslim population of the world there is one month of purification for all; its atmosphere is impregnated with faith, God's fear, obedience to law and order, moral purity and the excellence of action. Good men help each other in good acts. Bad men feel ashamed to take a wrong step. Among the rich the feeling of helping the poor is engendered and stimulated. Wealth is spent in God's way. All Muslims are in one and the same state, and this uniformity gives rise

Towards Understanding Islam

to the feeling that they are all members of one and the same nation. Fast is one of the most effective remedies for producing brotherhood, sympathy and internal cohesion.

All these are our benefits ; God gains nothing by keeping us hungry. He had made fasts obligatory to us solely for *our* benefit. Those who do not discharge this duty without reasonable excuse are guilty of cruelty to themselves. The most shameful is the attitude of those who openly eat and drink in the month of fast, by which they declare, as it were, that they are not of the Muslim community, that they do not at all care for the ordinances of Islam and that they openly turn their faces from the obedience of God Whom they allege to acknowledge. Now think how can those men for whom it is easy to secede from their nation, who feel no shame in rebelling against their Creator and Maintainer, and who openly break the law made by the founder of their religion—the greatest leader of mankind—be expected to be loyal, of good conduct, honest, dutiful and law-abiding to anyone else !

The third obligatory duty is *zakat*. God has made it obligatory for every Muslim that if he is in possession of a sum of Rs. 40 throughout a year, he ought to

give one rupee out of that to a poor relative, a beggar, a destitute person, a Muslim convert, a wayfarer or a debtor.*

Thus God has fixed at least $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the wealth of the rich as the share of the poor. If the rich give away in God's name more than the fixed proportion, it is a good act, and they would deserve more merit.

You should note that this share does not reach God, nor does God need anything. But He ordains, "If you, O man ! willingly and unstintingly give away something to your destitute brother, you give it, as it were, to Me, and on his behalf I will give you in return many times more than that, provided of course, that you do not expressly put obligation on him, nor abase him or treat him with contempt, nor expect gratitude from him, nor wish your charity be publicly known among the people that they might praise your generosity. If you keep your mind free of such unholy ideas, and give to the poor a share of your wealth solely for

*Zakat is payable not only for cash money, but it becomes due also for gold and silver (in any form), for commercial property and for cattle. The measure or proportion of zakat in these things is a matter of detail, which it is not our intention to describe in this short treatise. We have taken only the instance of cash money here in order to explain to you the advisability and the advantages of zakat.

Towards Understanding Islam

My pleasure, I will bestow upon you such a portion from My endless treasures that you will never be able to exhaust it."

God has made *zakat* as obligatory on us as the *namaz* and fast. It is a great pillar of Islam. Its object is that Muslims should help each other, and no Muslim should be found destitute, hungry or disgraced or debased. Let the rich maintain the needy, so that the latter might not beg or steal. No man should squander his wealth on his personal gratification, comfort and prestige; he should keep in mind that in his abundance there is also a portion due to the orphans, the widows and the needy of his community. Beside them the deserving persons are those who are capable to do business but cannot do so for lack of capital, those children who are endowed by Nature with good brain and intelligence but cannot afford to get education, and the disabled who cannot do anything. He who does not admit their right is cruel. What cruelty can be greater than your possessing bags full of money, enjoying life in grand houses and moving about in motor cars, while thousands of the members of your community are destitute and in need of bread, and thousands of your children are deprived of education and thousands of men are wandering without employment. Islam is utterly against such selfishness.

The civilization of the *kafirs* teaches them to hoard all the wealth they can earn, and increase it by drawing to themselves through interest even the earnings of others. Islam, on the other hand, teaches you that if God grant you more wealth than you actually need, do not hoard the surplus, but give some of it to your brethren, so that their needs be provided for and that they might be able to work and earn like yourself.

The fourth obligatory *Ibadat* for the Muslim is **Pilgrimage**, which is necessary to be performed only once in life, and is incumbent only on those who can afford travelling expenses to Mecca and back to their houses.

On the present site of Mecca, thousands of years before now, Abraham, the Prophet (God's blessings be upon him !), had built a small house for worshipping God. In appreciation of his sincerity and pure love for Himself, God blessed and consecrated that house as His own House, and ordained that whosoever worshipped Him should do so facing that House. He also commanded that he who wished to please Him more should go to it in the same simple dress which Abraham used to wear, and circumambulate the House with the same love which Abraham had cherished for Him. He further ordered, "when

Towards Understanding Islam

you come to My House purify your hearts, suppress your physical desires, avoid bloodshed, bad acts and bad tongue, present yourselves there with the same reverence and humility which you ought to observe in the presence of your Master. Consider that you are going in the presence of a King Who governs the earth and the heavens, and before Whom all men are but indigent and helpless. When you come to me with humility I will enrich you with My favours."

In one respect pilgrimage is the most important of all duties. If one does not cherish true love for God, how would he be ready to part with his friends and relatives, stop his own occupation and take upon himself the trouble and inconvenience of a long journey. To intend to perform pilgrimage, therefore, of itself shows the love and sincerity of the pilgrim for God. This journey is not like the ordinary journeys undertaken in worldly interest; in it the man always has the attitude of attention and devotion towards God. The further he advances the keener becomes his love and zeal; the nearer he approaches the Kaaba, the fire of sacred love becomes stronger; his heart of itself despises sin and disobedience, and feels remorse for his past commissions. He prays God to grant him strength for obedience to Him in future. He feels gratification in his

remembrance of God and in his devotion to Him. He tarries longer in his prostrations, and does not like to lift his head from that position. In reciting the Quran he feels a new joy, and experiences a new pleasure in keeping fast. When he enters the Hejaz he at once mentally surveys the whole history of the early Islam. Everywhere he sees the relics of those who loved God, and sacrificed their lives for His sake. Every grain of its sand witnesses the glory and grandeur of Islam, and every piece of stone declares, "this is the land where Islam took birth, and whence God's Word rose high." Thus the Muslim's heart becomes full of love for God, and he returns to his house with impressions so deep that they remain stamped on his mind till death.

Along with the spiritual improvement effected by the *hajj* (pilgrimage), it is so ordained by God as to promote our worldly interests in numerous ways. Through *hajj* Mecca has been the centre for the Muslims of the whole world, from every corner of which the votaries of Islam gather there at one fixed time of the year. They mix with each other, and a bond of love is established among them, together with the impression that Muslims of whatever race or country they be are of one nation, and are brothers to each other. In this respect, if *hajj* is a religious

duty in one aspect, it is at the same time a conference of all the Muslims of the world, and the best means of producing unity among them.

The last obligatory duty imposed upon you **Defence of Islam.** by God is the defence, or promoting the cause, of Islam. Though, technically it is not one of the "pillars" of Islam, still it is one of the most important Islamic duties, and it has been greatly stressed in the Quran as well as in the Traditions of the Prophet. Really it is more important than the "pillars," it is the soul of Islam, its very essence. What is the promotion of the cause of Islam, and why has it been regarded so. You will easily understand it by an analogy. Suppose a person claims that he is your friend, but really he has no sympathy for you, nor does he care whether you gain or lose. He will not hesitate to do what is useful to himself, though it might involve loss to you. He avoids joining you in what is of use to you simply because he gains nothing by it. If you are in trouble, he does not help you. If some persons speak ill of you, he joins them, or at least is silent. If your enemies do something against you, he joins them, or at least does nothing to protect you from their mischief.

Now, will you consider such a man as your friend? Certainly you will say, 'no, never.' Be-

cause his claim for friendship is only a lip-expression, and his heart is devoid of any feeling of friendship. Friendship necessitates love and sincerity between friends ; one should be a sympathetic well-wisher of his friend, should be of service to him when necessary, should help him against his enemies and should not suffer ill spoken against him. If a friend does not possess these qualities, he is a hypocrite, and his claim of friendship is false.

From this analogy you can think that when you claim to be a Muslim what duties does this claim entail upon you. To be a Muslim implies to have zeal for Muslim honour, to love Islam more than everything else, to have genuine sympathy with the Muslims. Whatever you do in the world, always keep in view the interest of Islam and the Muslims. For your personal interest, or for protecting yourself from any loss, your action must never involve injury to the interests of Islam or the Muslims. You must take part sincerely in whatever be of use to Islam or the Muslims, not minding the sacrifice of your life or property ; and you must keep aloof from any measure intended to injure Islam and the Muslims. Look upon the honour of your religion and your community as your own honour. Just as you cannot bear disrespect to yourself, so do

not tolerate disrespect to your religion and to your community. Just as you cannot help your enemy against your own self, so do not help the enemies of Islam and Muslims against them. Just as you are ready for every sacrifice in defence of your life, property and honour, so be always ready for every sacrifice in defence of Islam and the Muslims. Any man who calls himself a Muslim must possess these qualities, otherwise he will be reckoned among the hypocrites, and his actions will prove the falsehood of his claim.

What is known as *jihad* in our religious language is really the spirit of and struggle for upholding the banner of Islam. The literal meaning of *jihad* is to do an act to the utmost extent of one's power. In this light one who endeavours to exalt the Word of God by money, by tongue, by pen, by hand and feet, does *jihad*. Technically, however, it is especially applied for that fight against the enemies of Islam, wherein one enters, having purged his mind of all worldly intetest, and solely for the sake of securing God's pleasure. This kind of *jihad* is known as *farz-i-kifayah* فرض کنایہ (i.e., a duty imposed upon all Muslims, but in case when one group of Muslims performs it, the rest are exempted from its discharge. If, however, an enemy invade a Muslim country, *jihad* becomes obligatory, like the *namaz* and fast, on all the

Muslim inhabitants of that country, and if they be unable to repel the attack, it is obligatory for every Muslim of the neighbouring countries (or territories) to help them; if their help be inadequate to repel the enemy, it becomes as obligatory as prayer and fast on the Muslims of the whole world to help them, that is, whoever of the Muslims defaulted in rendering the required help would be guilty of sin. In such cases *jihad* excels in importance even the prayer and fast, because such crisis is an opportunity for the test of one's faith. The very faith of him who does not come forward to help Islam and Muslims in trouble is doubtful; in this case his *namaz* is of no use, nor his fasts of any value. If some wretch from among the Muslims were to side with the enemy against Islam and the Muslims, he would certainly be a hypocrite; his *namaz*, fast and pilgrimage will not avail him.

Chapter VI

FAITH AND RELIGIOUS LAW

Difference between the Faith and the Canons—
The reasonableness of the laws of religion—
Fiqh ; Tasawwuf.

We have, so far, explained to you the problems of the Faith. Now we will mention something of the *Shariat*, i.e., Religious Law given by Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him!). Before that, however, let us see what is Religious Law, and what is the difference between it and the Faith.

In the chapter gone before we have explained to you that all the Prophets

Difference
between the Faith
and the Religious
Law.

taught the Faith of Islam. The Faith of Islam, as already mentioned, is that you should believe in God, His attributes, and in the Day of Judgment, as taught by the Prophets of God, and that you should believe in God's Books to be true, give up all your ways of life, and believe the ways directed by those Books to be right and true; that you should obey the

Towards Understanding Islam

Prophets of God, follow them alone and abandon everything else ; and that in your worship you should not associate anyone with God. This faith and worship are jointly called the Faith, and this is common in the teachings of all the Prophets.

Procedural Law includes the methods of worship, social principles, laws concerning transactions and relations between man and man, the rules and conditions regarding the clean and the unclean, the lawful and the unlawful and similar other problems. Concerning these points God had, in the beginning, sent different codes of Law. His Prophets came one after another to impart civic and moral education to every people, so as to prepare each of them separately for the final acceptance of a universal code that was forthcoming. When the task of preparing mankind was accomplished God sent Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him !) with that final universal Law, which is applicable in each detail for the whole world. Now, the Faith is the same which the previous Prophets had taught, but all the previous codes have been cancelled, and in their place such a code of Law has been instituted that uniform methods of life, social principles, laws regulating all transactions, and conditions of clean and unclean have been defined and explained for the whole mankind.

Faith and Religious Law

We have two sources for knowing the law and its principles belonging to Islam: **The sources of the religious Law.** the Holy Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet. The Quran, you know, is God's Book, and every word of it is from God. By the Traditions is meant the records of the Prophet, which have reached us. The whole life of the Prophet (God's blessings be upon him !) was a commentary of the Quran. From the time of his appointment as Prophet, for 23 years, he was always engaged in teaching and instructing the people, and was, by word and by deed, explaining to them what was the way of living in accordance with God's pleasure. During these busy years his associates (both men and women), his relatives and his wives carefully listened to his words, watched his actions most minutely, and in every affair of their own they asked his rulings. Sometimes he would say, "do such and such a thing, or do not do it." Those present listened to whatever he said, committed it to memory, and conveyed it to those who were not present. In the same way he acted sometimes in a certain method. Those who saw him remembered his method and communicated to those who had not seen him acting in that way. Sometimes a person did something in his presence, and he remained silent, or expressed his approval,

or forbade him to do so again. All those who were present preserved it in their memory, and communicated the same to others who had not been present on that occasion. His associates, men and women, observed all this; some of them only preserved them in their memory, others wrote them down, noting at the same time from whom they had heard them. Gradually all these traditions were committed to writing, and the result was an immense store of traditions. Of the collection of traditions the books of Imam Malik, Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Imam Tirmizi, Imam Abu Dawood, Imam Nasai and Imam Ibn Maja are considered very reliable and authentic.

Studying carefully the commands and ordinances in the Quran and the *Fiqh*.

Traditions, some learned theologians arranged all of them in the form of a code of Laws, which is known as *fiqh*. As every man cannot understand the subtleties of the Quran, nor is every man learned in the Traditions to be able to deduce the laws of religion for himself, those learned men who prepared the *fiqh* after years of careful study and research have done a tremendous service to the Muslims of the whole world, and the latter can never repay them with sufficient gratitude. It is due to the labours of these great men that to-day millions of Muslims

are following that law without any difficulty, and no one has any trouble in knowing the commands of God and the Prophet.

In the beginning many theologians had arranged the *fiqh* in their different styles, but in course of time four *fiqhs* remained as accepted and followed by a great majority of the Muslims.

- (1) The *fiqh* of Imam Abu Hanifah, who compiled it in collaboration with Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad, Imam Zufar and other such great theologians.
- (2) The *fiqh* of Imam Malik.
- (3) The *fiqh* of Imam Shafii.
- (4) The *fiqh* of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

These four *fiqhs* had been arranged within two hundred years after the Prophet (God's blessings be upon him !). The differences between them are natural. When different persons separately investigate a matter, or try to understand it, there must be some differences in the outturn of their research and their understandings. But as they were all truth-loving, well-intentioned and well-wishers, the later Muslims admit the four *fiqhs* as authority. It is, no doubt, evident that in a certain matter one method alone can be adopted ; four different methods are not applicable at the same time. The learned have, therefore, decided that the Muslims should follow in their

life one system only, and that they would be right in following whichever they like.

Fiqh concerns the apparent action of man. Its domain is to see whether an *Tasawwuf* action is or is not in perfect accord with a certain law and the method of its execution. It has nothing to do with the condition or attitude of heart at the time of the action. To deal with mental attitudes and conditions lies in the domain of another science called *tasawwuf*. For example, take the case of *namaz*: *Fiqh* deals with your ablutions, your standing in the direction of Kaaba, your performance of all the principal parts of the *namaz*, your reciting all that ought to be recited in the *namaz*, the number of *rakats* and the time of each *namaz*. When you have satisfied the demands of *fiqh* in all these points, in the light of *fiqh* your *namaz* is complete without any flaw. *Tasawwuf*, however, is concerned with your mental condition during the *namaz*, i.e., were you or not attentive to God; was or was not your heart free from the ideas about worldly affairs; was or was not your heart devoid of God's fear, of the certainty of God's omniscience and omnipresence, and of the desire to achieve His pleasure alone; how far the *namaz* purified your soul and reformed your morals; and how far did the *namaz* make you a true and staunch Muslim. All these points are connected

with the real object of the *namaz*, the more efficiently you achieve them, the nearer perfection will be your *namaz* in the light of *tasawwuf*; and the more deficient they are, the more meritoriously deficient will your *namaz* be in that light. In the same way in the execution of all orders *fiqh* is only concerned with its outward form, while *tasawwuf* weighs and measures your sincerity of action, the good nature of your intentions and the spirit of true obedience.

An example will explain to you this difference better. When a person visits you, you look at him from two aspects. One is whether he is sound in body or has any defect like blindness or lameness, etc., good-looking or bad-looking, cleanly or shabbily dressed, and so on. The other aspect is moral, i.e., his habits and character, his sense and intelligence, his learning or otherwise, his goodness or badness. The first aspect is, as it were, of *fiqh*; the second that of *tasawwuf*. When you choose someone for a friend, you will examine both the aspects of his personality. You will like him to be good and desirable both inwardly and outwardly. In the same way, according to Islam, the desirable life of a person is what might be right and proper both as to mental rectitude and the outward execution of Islamic principles. The action of a man, whose apparent obedience is right

and proper, but mentally he is devoid of the spirit of obedience, is like a beautiful but dead person. On the other hand, a man who possesses all the inward virtues, but his apparent obedience is not proper, is like a very good and noble person, who happens to be ill-looking and cripple.

From this example you would have understood the relation between *fiqh* and *tasawwuf*. Some say that *tasawwuf* has no relation with *fiqh*, and that they are altogether different departments. Ignorant *sufis* generally hold such views, but they are utterly wrong. Islam has no room for any *tasawwuf* which may have no relation with *fiqh* or the apparent execution of the laws of religion. No *sufi* has the privilege to be exempted from *namaz*, fast, pilgrimage and *zakat*. No *sufi* has any right to act against the laws ordained by God and His Messenger with regard to social living, morality, transactions, rights, obligatory duties and what is specially fixed to be lawful and unlawful. No person who is not a right follower of the Prophet (God's blessings be upon him !), and does not strictly observe the ways directed by him, has any right to be called a *sufi*. *Tasawwuf* is really extreme love for God and the Prophet, and this kind of love demands that there should not be even a hair-breadth deviation from the exact observance of the ordinances of God and the

Faith and Religious Law

Prophet. Islamic *tasawwuf*, therefore, is nothing apart from *fiqh*. *Tasawwuf* is nothing but the most sincere and well-intentioned execution of the laws of *fiqh*, and the inspiration of the spirit of God's love and fear in obedience to Him.

Chapter VII

SHARI'AT

The Law of Islam

The principles of Shari'at—The four kinds of rights—Rights of God—Rights of self—Rights of men—Rights of all creatures—Universal and eternal code.

In this last chapter we propose to explain the principles of the Law of Islam, whereby you will know how it regulates man's life and what wisdom and foresight underlies it.

If you think of yourself, you will find that you have come in this world provided with many faculties and powers, and that each faculty or power requires naturally to function. You possess intellect, will, desire, speech, sight, hearing, tastes, power of hands and feet, hatred and anger, fondness and love, fear and cupidity, etc. None of them is useless. They have been given to you because you need them. Your life in the world, and your success in life depend on the

The principles of Shari'at.

Towards Understanding Islam

fact that you fulfil what your nature and your inherent tendencies demand, and this can be effected only when you make your God-given powers serve you. When you think further you will see that God has also provided you with the means of putting them to function. The first of these is your body which is the repository of all the implements of service. Next to that there are your environments in the world full of numerous means of every description. Men of your own kind are present to help you; there are animals, minerals, the earth, water, air, heat, light and countless other things to serve you. God has created them so that you might make them serve you, and secure their help in your life.

Think of the matter in another light. The powers and faculties you possess have been given to you for your good, and not to be harmful to you. Therefore the right way of using them is only that which might be beneficial to you, and either do you no harm, or if harm be unavoidable, it should be as little as possible. All other ways are wrong according to reason. For instance, if you do something which might result in harm to yourself, it would be a mistake. If you use your powers in a way that might be harmful to other men, that also would be a mistake. If you employ your powers in such a wrong

way as to waste and destroy the means given to you that would also be a mistake. Your reason itself dictates that the harm is a thing that must be avoided, and it can be suffered only when it is absolutely unavoidable, or is expected to be ultimately very beneficial.

Think still further. There are two kinds of men found in the world. One kind include men who intentionally use some of their powers in a way that might be injurious to some of their own powers, or be harmful to other men, or be wasteful of those means which have been given to them. The other kind consists of men who do not do so intentionally, but they err through ignorance. The men of the first kind are wicked, and they require a strong system of law to govern and control them. The men of the second kind are ignorant, and they need the correct knowledge of the use of their powers.

The Law of God, as taught by His Prophet meets with both of these necessities. There is nothing in it tending to the waste of your powers or the suppression of your natural desires, nor does it kill your feelings and emotions. It does not say, "abandon the world, and wander about naked and starving in jungles and mountains, put yourself in all the inconvenience of self-annihilation, and give up all ease and comfort of life as unlaw-

ful." No, certainly not. It is the Law of the same God who has made this world for mankind. He would not like to stop or spoil this working world. He has not given man any useless power, or one that is not needed, nor has He created anything in the heavens and in the earth, which may not be of service to man. It is positively His intention that this great workshop of His should go on functioning regularly and gloriously, and that man should make full use of all his powers, make everything in the world serve him, use all the means provided for him in the earth and in the heavens, but he should not use them, intentionally or through ignorance, to harm himself or to harm others. The Law that God has given to man is meant to guide him in this matter. It forbids whatever is harmful to man, and sanctions or otherwise ordains whatever is useful to him. The fundamental principle of this Law is that man has the right, and in some cases it is his duty, to fulfil all his desires and needs, and make every struggle he can to promote his interests, with the only proviso that he should not exercise this right and duty of his, knowingly or unknowingly, in a way leading to the sacrifice of the same right and duty of others whom he should rather help and support. In acts where the end is two-sided—benefit as well as harm—the principle of this Law

is, "choose little harm for greater benefit, and sacrifice a little benefit for avoiding greater harm."

As every man in every age does not know regarding every thing and every action how far it is useful or harmful, God has ordained the right code for the whole life of man. A few centuries before now, the people did not understand many of the advantages which that code had in view, but now the increase of knowledge has made them clear. Many people even in these days do not understand some of them, but further progress of knowledge would bring more light to them. Those who relied upon their own immature knowledge and defective intellect have, at last, been obliged to adopt some of the provisions of this Law, after committing blunders and tasting bitter experiences for centuries. In contrast to them, those who believed and reposed their trust in the Prophet of God, and accepted his teachings, have been safe from errors, because they follow the Law which has been instituted in the light of absolutely correct knowledge, merely having implicit trust in the Messenger of God, whether they know or not the advisability of his instructions.

Four kinds of rights.

The Law of Islam imposes four kinds of rights on man:

1. The rights of God.

2. His own rights upon himself.
- 3 The rights of other men.
4. The rights of those things which God has placed in his service, and has empowered him to use for his benefit.

It is the duty of every true Muslim to understand all of them and to render them rightly. The Law deals with each right separately, and mentions such methods that all of them should be rendered at the same time, and none may be trampled upon.

The rights of God. The first and the foremost right of God is that man should have faith in Him alone, and should not associate anyone with Him. This is rendered only by declaring *la ilaha illallah*, as already mentioned.

The second right of God on us is to accept His *Hidayat* (guidance). This right is rendered by our belief in His Messenger as we have already explained.

The third right of God on us is that we should obey Him. This right is rendered by our following that law which is mentioned in God's Book and the *Sunnah* (instructions) of His Messenger. To this also we have referred before.

The fourth right of God on us is to worship Him. To render this right the duties imposed

upon man have been mentioned in the last but one chapter. As this right precedes and exceeds all the other rights, so to render it completely the latter are necessarily partially sacrificed. For instance, in the fulfilment of *namaz*, fast, etc., man has to sacrifice many of his personal rights. A man gets up early in the morning, and often in the winter he makes ablutions with cold water: during day and night he often puts off his necessary work, and gives up his pleasing recreations. In the month of fast he has to control his appetite for food, water, etc. In *zakat* he sacrifices his love for wealth for the sake of God's pleasure. In the pilgrimage he takes upon himself the troubles of journey and the sacrifice of his wealth. In *jihad* he sacrifices both his life and property. In the same manner the rights of other people are also more or less sacrificed in rendering God's rights. For instance a servant leaves his master's work, and goes to worship his Great Master. In the pilgrimage a man stops all his business, and undertakes the journey, whereby many people's rights are affected. In *jihad* a man takes away life and gives away life solely for God's pleasure. In the same way in rendering God's right's many of those things are sacrificed which are in one's power, as the sacrifice of animals and the consumption of wealth.

God has, however, fixed limitations for His own rights, which reduce the necessary sacrifice of other rights to minimum. God has allowed every facility for our fulfilment of the obligation of *namaz*. If you cannot get water for ablution, or you are sick, you can make *tayammum* (dry ablution). If you are in a journey, cut short the *namaz*. If you are ill, and cannot stand in the *namaz*, offer it sitting or lying. The matter to be recited in the *namaz* is not much, and the *namaz* at a time does not take more than a few minutes. At times of rest and ease one may recite a long chapter of the Quran in the *namaz*, but in the congregational prayers, and during business hours it is forbidden to lengthen the *namaz*. If one offers *nafl* (optional devotions) over and above the obligatory *namaz*, God is pleased, but He does not like you to deny yourselves sleep at night and rest in the day, or to spend your earning time in saying optional prayers at the sacrifice of the rights of your children and dependents.

Similarly every facility is given in the fast. In the whole year there is only one month for obligatory fasts. During journey and sickness you can omit them, and keep them at some other convenient time of the year. In the case of women, they are exempted from fasting when

pregnant or suckling or in their menses. If a fasting person happens to become suddenly ill with the fear of loss of life, he can break the fast. One is not allowed to continue fast even a minute longer than the fixed period. We are allowed to break the fast immediately at sunset, and eat and drink till the appearance of dawn. If one keeps *nafl*, i.e., optional fasts, God is more pleased, but He does not like you to keep fast continuously, and make yourself too weak to do your ordinary occupations well and satisfactorily.

For *zakat* also God has fixed the least proportion, and it is obligatory only on those who possess property of the value of *nisab* (Rs. 40 cash or its equivalent in gold or silver), and have the possession of it for full one year. If one gives away in charity more than that, God will be pleased with him, but He does not like us to sacrifice for charity our personal rights and the rights of our close relatives, and thereby impoverish ourselves. We are commanded to be moderate in charity.

Take the question of pilgrimage. It is obligatory for those who can afford money for the journey, and who are physically fit to bear its hardships. The other facility is that it is to be performed only once in the whole life at any time convenient to you. If there be war in the way,

or otherwise risk of life, you can postpone it. Along with it the parents' permission has been made a necessary condition, so that your aged parents may not suffer discomfort in your absence. From this appears that God has given more value to men's right even than His own rights.

The greatest sacrifice in the way of God is made in *jihad*, for a man sacrifices even his life and property for God's sake, and also sacrifices others' life and property. But, as we have mentioned before, the Islamic principle is that we should suffer a lesser loss to save ourselves from the greater loss. Now, think in the light of this principle that the supremacy of wrong over the right, and the subjugation and abasement of the Muslims is a much worse calamity than the loss of a few hundreds, or a few thousands, or even a few lacs of Muslims. In order to escape this greater calamity God has, therefore, commanded a smaller loss of life and property for His pleasure, but at the same time He forbids unnecessary bloodshed, and injuring the aged, the children, the women and the wounded and the sick. His order is to fight only against the aggressors. He enjoins us not to spread more than necessary destruction in the enemy's country, and to deal fairly with the enemy when you are the victors. We are instructed to observe the agreements made with

the enemy, and to stop fighting when the enemy does so. From this it follows that no sacrifice is allowed in the rendering of God's right more than is absolutely necessary.

The second kind of rights is man's personal **Personal rights.** rights, *viz.*, the rights of man's own body and soul, upon himself. You may be surprised to hear that man is more cruel to himself than to others. It is really astonishing, for apparently every person feels that he loves himself the most, and perhaps no one would admit to be his own enemy. But just think a little, and you will know what the real case is.

The greatest weakness of man is that when he feels an overpowering desire he becomes its slave, and for the sake of its gratification, knowingly or unknowingly, he causes great harm to himself. You notice a man getting into the habit of drinking ; he becomes mad for it, and puts up with loss of health, loss of money, loss of reputation, in fact, every kind of loss. Another person is so fond of eating that he takes as much stuff as he can, thus spoiling his health and endangering his life. A third person has become a slave to sexual appetite, and does what in the end must ruin him. A fourth person has the hobby of spiritual achievements ; he suppresses all his desires, refuses to gratify any of his physical necessities, evades

marriage, avoids food and drink, refuses to clothe himself, is not willing even to breathe naturally, retires into jungles and mountains and believes that the world is not made for him. We have mentioned a few instances of man's tendency to go to extremes, and you see this tendency in numerous ways and forms which you observe daily about you.

As the Islamic law (*Shari'at*) aims at the welfare of mankind, it warns him, "for thy own person there are rights upon thee." It keeps him away from all harmful things, as intoxicating drugs, pig's meat, beasts of prey, poisonous and unclean animals, carcases, etc., for all these things have an undesirable effect on man's health and his moral, intellectual and spiritual powers. In contrast to them, it allows him to use clean and useful things, and says to man, "do not deprive your body of clean food, for your body has a right on you." It forbids him to go about naked, and orders him to make use of dress as God has ordained. It orders him to work for living, and exhorts him not to remain idle, use the powers God has given him, and make use also of the resources God has created in the earth as well as in the heavens for his life and for his comfort.

It enjoins him to control and regulate his sensual desires, and orders him to marry for their

gratification. It forbids him to resort to self-suppression, and says, "Do not deny yourself the comfort and the joy of life. If you desire spiritual development, nearness to God and redemption in the next world, it is not necessary for that object to retire from the world. Live as a man of the world, remembering and fearing God. To follow strictly the laws ordained by Him is the sure means of success in this world and in the next.

It does not allow suicide, and informs man that his life is really God's property, which has been given to him as a trust to be made use of for a certain period and not to be wasted.

On one side the law of religion has ordered man to fulfil his personal desires, and on the other it has qualified it with the restriction that for their gratification he should not adopt methods affecting the rights of others. It has forbidden lying, for it not only sullies the liar, but is a source of harm to many other persons. It has also forbidden stealing, robbing, bribery, forgery, dishonesty, interest and usury, for whatever man gains by these means is really obtained by causing loss to others. Back-biting, tale-bearing, calumnia are forbidden. Gambling, lottery, speculative enterprises and all games of chance are also prohibited, for in these methods one

**The rights of
other men.**

man's benefit is based on losses of thousands of men. Deceiving, cheating and all such commercial transactions between two parties, wherein one party alone may be loser are entirely forbidden. Monopoly, hoarding of capital, storing of commodities to sell them on higher prices at the time of scarcity, withholding land from tillage, and all other manifestations of individual or group-selfishness are strictly prohibited. Murder and spreading mischief and disorder are also not allowed, for one man has no right to take away the lives of other men for his personal gain or gratification. Adultery and unnatural intercourse are strictly prohibited, for they not only impair the health of the perpetrator and vitiate his morality, but also spread indecency and immorality in his community, cause venereal diseases, ruin the health of the succeeding generations, give rise to public disorders and disturbances, upset the relations between man and man and cut away the very root of the social structure and civilization of the community.

These are the restrictions formulated by the Muslim religious law to prevent a man to encroach upon the rights of others for the sake of securing the rights of his own mind and body. But for the superior object of the progress and welfare of a human community one person not

injuring the interests of another alone is not enough. It is also necessary that their mutual relations be so established that each of them should help the others in their well-being. For this purpose we mention here very briefly the laws enacted in Islam.

Men's relations begin from a family. Let us see what it is. A family consists of husband, wife and their children. The Islamic rules of conduct for the family assign to man the duty of earning and trying to provide the necessities of his wife and children and to protect them, and to woman the duty of managing the household with her husband's earnings, to give to her husband and her children the greatest possible comfort and to bring up her children as best as she can. The duty of the children is to obey and respect their parents and, when old, to serve them. For the satisfactory conduct of this management of the household Islam has adopted two measures. One is that the husband is given the position of governor of the household. Just as the administration of a city or a school cannot be effected without a governor or a head master, respectively, so the affairs of a household cannot be regulated without a head to govern it. In a household where every member of it is independent, disorder and confusion must reign, and not a vestige of comfort or happiness.

will be found there. The husband goes one way, and the wife another ; the children will be ruined. A head of the house with authority is necessary to keep away all these evils ; the husband who is responsible for the maintenance and protection of the household can be the only fit person for this position. The second measure is that the burden of all transactions and doings outside the house having been placed on the shoulders of the husband, the woman has been ordered not to go out of the house except when it is necessary. She has been relieved of the outdoor duties of the house, so that she might perform undisturbed her manifold indoor duties, and that her outgoing might not upset the peace, order and comfort of the house and the rearing of the children. This does not mean that the woman is never allowed to go out of the house. She is allowed to go out when necessary, as aforesaid, but the law has specified home to be her special sphere of work. and has stressed that women should attend most to improve the home life.

The sphere of a family extends through family relations and marriage connections. To bind together the members in this sphere, to keep their relations healthy and to make each one a helper of the other, the Islamic law has formulated certain rules based on many wise principles.

(1) Marriage between those men and women who have naturally the closest association with each other has been prohibited, as mother and son, father and daughter, step-father and step-daughter, step-mother and step-son, brother and sister, foster-brother and foster-sister, paternal uncle and his niece, aunt (father's sister) and her nephew, maternal uncle (mother's brother) and niece, aunt (mother's sister) and her nephew, mother-in-law, and her son-in-law, father-in-law and his daughter-in-law. One of the numerous advantages resulting from the prohibition of such marriage relations is that the relations between such men and women remain absolutely pure, and that they can mix with each other without restraint and with unalloyed affection.

(2) Beyond the limits of the forbidden marriage relations mentioned above, such ties are allowed between men and women of kindred families, so that such relationship may bind them still closer. Marriage connections between two families which freely associate and mix with each other, and which, therefore, know each other's habits and customs, are generally successful, while such a union between strange families often ends in unpleasantness and disagreement of the parties. For this reason Islam prefers relations with kindred families to those with strange families, though

it is not forbidden.

(3) In a group of kindred families generally, rich and poor, prosperous and destitute co-exist. The Islamic principle is that a man's relatives have the greatest right on him. The respect for the tie between relatives is technically called *sila-i-rehm*. The Muslims are enjoined to respect this tie in every way and to make it firmer and closer. To be disloyal to relatives is called *qata-i-rehm*, and is a great sin. If a relative becomes poor, or is beset with some trouble, it is the duty of his rich and prosperous relations to help him. In *zakat* and common charity also special regard for the rights of relatives has been enjoined.

The law of inheritance is so formulated that the property left by the deceased, be it more or less, should not remain centred in one place, but some portion of it should be shared by each relative. Son, daughter, wife, husband, father, mother, brother and sister are the nearest relations of man, therefore their shares in the inheritance are first settled and given away to them. In the case of the absence of these relations shares are given to the next nearest relatives. Thus after a man's decease his wealth becomes of use to many of his kith and kin. This law of Islam is of unique excellence, and other nations are also adopting it. It is sad to note, however, that Muslims them-

selves have begun to ignore it through foolishness and ignorance ; especially in India the law of giving to daughters their due portion is being widely ignored. It is palpable cruelty, and rebellion against the clear Quranic command.

After the family a man's relations are recognised with his friends, neighbours, residents of his quarter of the town or village, citizens and the persons with whom he has some kind of dealings. Islam orders one to treat them all truthfully, justly and courteously, to hurt no one's feelings, to avoid indecent and abusive language, to help each other, to attend the sick sympathetically, to sympathise with those in trouble, to support and help the destitute, the needy and the unfit to work, to look after the orphans and the widows, to feed the hungry and the starving, to clothe the naked, and to help the unemployed in getting employment. Islam says, " If God has bestowed wealth upon you, do not squander it in your own luxurious living." The prohibition to use gold and silver vessels and jewellery, to wear costly dresses (silk, etc.), and to waste money in useless recreations and vain comforts is based on the principle that no man should spend on himself his entire wealth which can maintain thousands of human beings. It is cruel that money which can fill many starving stomachs be hanging on one's person in the form

of a jewel, or be lying on his table as a mere decorative vessel, or be spread in his room as a costly carpet (*qalin*), or be burnt away in fire-works. Islam does not aim at depriving anyone of his wealth. What one has earned or inherited is, no doubt, his own property, and Islam gives full right to enjoy your wealth. It also allows you that the wealth God has given you may be manifested in your dress, in your house, and in your riding vehicle. But the object of Islam is that you may live a simple and frugal life, not multiply your wants to excess, and along with your personal rights keep in view the rights of your relatives, your friends, your neighbours and your community.

Coming out of these limited circles of relations, let us have a look at the wider circle embracing all the Muslim groups forming one nation. For this larger circle Islam has formulated certain rules and regulations, whereby Muslims are obliged to help each other in their welfare, and no evils should appear among them as far as possible. For example, we refer to a few of them.

(1) To preserve the morality of the nation a rule has been formed that those men and women free from the limitation of the marriage law specified above should not associate freely with each other. The society of women should be

separate from that of men. Women should be more attentive to their duties relating to the house. If they have to come out for some necessity, they should not go out adorned. They should have plain dress, and their bodies should be well covered. They should also cover their faces and hands unless it were found necessary to expose them, when they might be exposed, but they should be covered again after the necessity is over. Along with this men have prohibited from looking at strange women, and if accidentally their eyes fall upon them, they should at once look away from them. To try to see them is wrong, and to try to seek their acquaintance is more wrong. It is the duty of every man and every woman to look after their personal morality. As God has ordained marriage whereby sensual appetite is gratified, no man should attempt to overstep its limits, rather he should not even think of such a wish.

(2) For the same purpose it is enacted that no man should expose his body from the knees up to the navel, nor should a woman expose any part of her body except face and hands to any person other than her husband, however closely related to her he might be. This is technically called *satr* (cover), and to keep these parts covered is the duty of every man and woman. From this

Towards Understanding Islam

rule the object of Islam is to suppress immodesty, which is likely to give rise to moral deviations.

(3) Islam does not approve of such pastimes and entertainments as tend to stimulate sensual passions and vitiate morality, and are only waste of time, health and money. Recreation in itself is necessarily an inducement for activity and quickens the spirit of life. It must accompany hard work, but it must be of a nature to refresh the mind and revive the spirit. It should have in no case the opposite effect, i.e., of making the mind gross and depressing the spirit. Those absurd entertainments, wherein thousands of persons sit together and see supposed criminal acts and scenes of immodesty, though they be gratifying to the senses, tend to spoil national habits and morality.

(4) To secure unity and welfare of the larger Muslim community, Muslims have been enjoined to avoid hostility and opposition and creating parties among themselves, and they have been exhorted to settle their disputes well-meaningly by the principles laid down in the Quran and the *sunnat*. If the parties do not come to a settlement in that way, instead of quarrelling and fighting between themselves they should leave the decision to God. In matters of common national welfare they should help each other, obey their leaders, keep aloof from quarrel-mongers,

and not waste their energies and disgrace their community by internal quarrels and differences.

(5) Muslims have perfect liberty to learn sciences and arts with their practical useful methods from non-Muslim people, but they have been prohibited from imitating the living of the latter. One people begin to imitate the mode of living of another people only when the former are conscious of their own abasement, and admit the comparative superiority of the latter to themselves. This is the worst kind of slavery. It is an open declaration by the imitators of their own inferiority and defeat. The final result of such an act is that all culture and civilization of the imitating people dies away. It is for this reason that the Prophet (God's blessing be upon him !) has positively forbidden the Muslims to assume the mode of life of the non-Muslim people. Any man of ordinary intelligence can understand that the power of a nation is not due to their mode of dress or mode of life, but it is due to their knowledge, their discipline, and their energy of action. Therefore, if you wish to gain power, adopt those things which give power to a nation, and not those which bring slavery in their train, and which ultimately must lead to your absorption among the people whom you imitate and to the death-knell of your nation.

In dealing with non-Muslim people the Muslims have not been instructed to be intolerant and narrow-minded. On the other hand, they have been prohibited from speaking ill of the religious leaders or saints of other people as well as from saying anything derogatory to their religion. They have also been instructed not to create dispute with them. If they observe peace and conciliatory attitude towards us, we are instructed to keep peaceful and friendly relations with them and to deal with them fairly and justly. Our national nobility demands that we should possess greater human sympathy and politeness than any other people. Bad manners, oppression and narrow-mindedness are against the dignity and constitution of Islam. The Muslim is born in this world naturally to become the best example of humanity, nobility and goodness, and thereby win other people's hearts.

Now we mention briefly the rights of the fourth kind. God has honoured man with power over His countless creatures. By his power he subdues them, and makes them serve him and be useful to him. On account of his being a superior creature he has every right to do so. Still they have rights upon man, which are that he should not make a fruitless use of them, nor should he

**The rights of
all creatures.**

unnecessarily harm or hurt them. When he uses them for his service he should cause them the least possible harm, and should employ the best and the least injurious method of their service.

Our religious law embodies many instructions in this matter. For instance, we are allowed to slaughter animals only for food, and we are forbidden to deprive them of life without necessity. To slaughter them the method of *zabih* has been fixed, which is the best method of obtaining meat from the animals. In methods other than *zabih*, though they are less painful and troublesome, the meat of the animal loses many of its useful properties. Other methods of slaughtering whereby all the virtues of the meat are retained are more painful than *zabih*. Islam avoids both these methods, and aims at less pain to the animal, and the retention of as many virtues in the meat as possible. To kill an animal by causing continuous pains is considered abominable in Islam. Islam allows the killing of poisonous animals and beasts of prey, only because it values man's life more than theirs ; still it does not allow their painful death more than is absolutely necessary.

Regarding the animals used for riding and the beasts of burden Islam distinctly forbids man to keep them hungry, to take very hard work from them and to beat them cruelly. To catch birds

Towards Understanding Islam

and imprison them in cages without any special purpose is considered abominable. Leaving aside animals, Islam does not approve of even the useless cutting of trees. Man can use their fruit, but he has no right to destroy them. Vegetable kingdom still possesses life ; Islam does not allow waste even of lifeless things, so far that it does not allow the wasteful flow of too much water.

This is a very short resume of the religious law which had been sent through Muhammad (God's blessing be upon him !) to the whole world, and to remain applicable for ever. According to this law there is no difference between man and man except in faith and in religion. Those religious and social systems which differentiate man on the principle of descent, country and colour can never become universal or world-institutions, for a man of particular descent or family cannot be a man of any other descent or family, nor can the whole world be gathered together and be settled in one country, nor can the blackness of a negro, of the yellowness of a Chinese, or the whiteness of a European ever alter. It is for this reason that a social system based on such limited principles must remain confined to one nation. On the other hand, the social system and the law of Islam is universally applicable to the whole world.

**Universal and
eternal Law.**

because any person who declares belief in *La ilaha illalaho Muhammad-ar-Rasulullah* can enter the pale of Islam with the same rights as those of other Muslims. Islam makes no distinction between descent, language, country, home, colour, etc.

Besides that, this Law of Islam is eternally applicable, because it is not based on the customs and traditions of any particular people, and is not for any particular period, but it is based on the same principles of Nature on which man has been created. As that nature remains the same in all periods and under all circumstances, the laws based on its principles should also be applicable to every period and under all circumstances.

ERRATA

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Read.</i>
6	20	mystified not only	mystified and not only
6	24	attitude ; advises him	attitude advises him ;
7	20	controls	is controlling
13	10	ceases, to	ceases to
20	3	true of promise	true to his word
20	15	earth power	earthly power
24	2	probelms	problems
24	9	this	his
24	10	onroads	inroads
26	24	being	be
27	23	chose	choose
28	7—8	confirm with	conform to
28	13	binding to	binding on
29	23	are	were
44	21	that we	“ We
44	23	truth	truth.”
45	4	accordig	according
56	21	Christian	pagan
59	28	strapped	stripped
71	18	unequivocab	unequivocal
111	11	weight	weigh
119	22	cnostituents	constituents
120	2	possible	impossible
128	10	been be	been
138	1will bestow	I will bestow
182	23	of the	or the